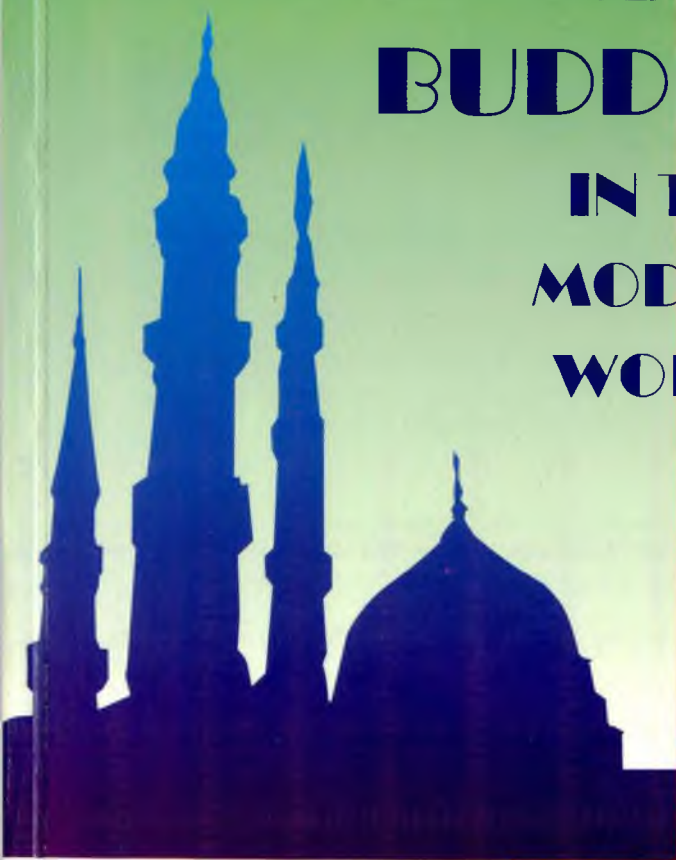


**ISLAM
AND
BUDDHISM
IN THE
MODERN
WORLD**

IMRAN NAZAR HOSEIN





IMRAN N. HOSEIN

Imran N. Hosein is presently the Imam of Masjid Dar al-Qur'an in Long Island, New York. A former diplomat in the Trinidad and Tobago Foreign Service, he gave up his career in 1985 in order to devote himself full-time to preaching Islam.

He studied Islam under the guidance of the outstanding Islamic scholar and sufi Shaikh, Maulana Dr. Muhammad Fadlur Rahman Ansari, at the Institute of Islamic Studies in Pakistan. He also studied Philosophy at the University of Karachi and International Relations at the University of the West Indies (Institute of International Relations) and the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva, Switzerland.

He has traveled extensively while serving the cause of Islam around the world. Since 1989, for example, he has made nine Islamic lecture-tours of South East Asia.

Since writing his book on Buddhism at age 29 he has emerged as a prolific writer. His latest works, published in the Ansari Memorial Series (to honor to his teacher 25 years after his death), include the following seven titles:

- "Dreams in Islam - A Window to Truth and to the Heart";
- "The Religion of Abraham and the State of Israel - A View from Islam";
- "The Caliphate The Hejaz and the Saudi-Wahhabi Nation-State";
- "The Importance of the Prohibition of Riba in Islam";
- "The Prohibition of Riba in the Qur'an and Sunnah";
- "One Jamaat One Ameer - The Organization of a Muslim Community in the Age of Fitan"; and
- "The Strategic Significance of the Fast of Ramadan and the Isra and Miraj."

The distinctive character of his Islamic thought is its originality. He is gifted with the ability to use the Qur'an (and Hadith) to first understand, and then to explain, the world today, - its politics, its economics, its spiritual moral and social predicament, and the stage in the historical process in which we are today located. He is also gifted to locate, and to articulate with passion, that specific guidance in the Qur'an and Hadith with which Muslims should respond to the awesome challenges of this age.

ISLAM AND BUDDHISM IN THE MODERN WORLD

Imran N. Hosein

Published by
**Centre For Research and Training in Da‘wah Methodology
(CRTDM)**
The Muslim Converts’ Association of Singapore
32 Onan Road, The Galaxy,
Singapore 424484
Tel: (65) 348 8344 • Fax: (65) 4406724

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*1st. edition published by World Federation of Islamic Missions
Karachi. Pakistan. 1972.
Reprinted 1976.*

ISBN 981-04-1329-7

*Cover Designed by
S. Mohdir*

*This edition published by The Muslim Converts' Association
of Singapore. 1999.*

*Printed by:
Kerjaya Printing Industries Pte Ltd
Singapore*

**Dedication
to
the Shaikh al-Islam
of Trinidad and Tobago**

His Eminence

**Dr. Muhammad Fazl-ur-Rahman al-Ansari
al-Qaderi
*M.A., B.Th., Ph.D.***

*This is the first fruit of that training I have
been receiving from you for the last six years.
I dedicate it to you as a humble token of
gratitude for the deep love, affectionate care,
and paternal concern with which you have
been watching over my life and the
development of my thought.*

FOREWORD

It gives me great pleasure to introduce Imran Hosein's research monograph on *Islam and Buddhism in the Modern World* which forms his first attempt in the field of authorship and which can safely be said to be the first book on this topic ever written by an Islamic scholar.

The author, who is a dear pupil of mine, has inherited the illustrious traditions of modern scholarship in Philosophy and Religion represented by Dr. Syed Zafar-ul-Hassan M.A., LL.B., Dr. Phil. (Erl.), D. Phil. (Oxon.) and Dr. Sir Muhammad Iqbal M.A. , Ph.D., D.Litt.D., Bar-at-Law, and of missionary endeavour represented by His Eminence Muhammad Abdul Aleem Siddiqui al-Qaderi (of blessed memory), and I am proud of him. Though young in years, he is already on the road to ripeness in wisdom, and I am sure that his continued labour as a researcher will bring to him greater and greater glory in the cause of Truth.

Already, the present book is a very promising achievement. His treatment of the subject demonstrates clear-headedness, objectivity and logical acumen of a high order. And his approach, in keeping with the spirit of Islam, is sympathetic towards Buddha and Buddhism, - in sharp contrast to the malicious and vindictive approach so often demonstrated by Christian and *Arya Samaj* scholars in their writings on Islam.

I pray to God to bless this book with the choicest success. Amen!

Dr. Muhammad Fazl-ur-Rahman al-Ansari al-Qaderi

December 25, 1971

Islamic Centre,
North Nazimabad-B,
Karachi. Pakistan.

PREFACE

(to first edition)

It was in July 1971, just after my graduation at the Aleemiyah Institute of Islamic Studies, that its President, Dr. Muhammad Fazl-ur-Rahman Ansari al-Qaderi, asked me to write a book on Buddhism, informing me that he had been deeply impressed by my examination-script relating to the question-paper on Comparative Religion. I was then packing to return to my home in Trinidad, West Indies. But because of the love and respect I have for my spiritual and academic preceptor, I found myself compelled to undertake this research assignment. The time at my disposal was not unlimited. In fact, I could devote only twenty-one days to accomplish this difficult job. But I feel Allah's Grace has blessed me with the privilege of making a fruitful contribution to the cause of Truth.

For all my academic and spiritual attainments, I am deeply indebted to the unique and revolutionary scheme of education visualized and realized by Dr. Muhammad Fazl-ur-Rahman Ansari al-Qaderi at the Aleemiyah Institute of Islamic Studies. This Islamic Institute was founded in Karachi, Pakistan, for producing Islamic leaders who would be comprehensively educated in Islam, Comparative Religion and Modern Thought.

I also owe a deep debt of gratitude to the learned Maulana himself whose rich multi-dimensional scholarship has assisted me in understanding the problems of Religion and Philosophy more than anything else, and whose dynamic religious personality has influenced my development immensely.

I owe gratitude also to Anjuman Sunnat wal Jama'ah Association of Trinidad and Tobago for assisting my studies in Pakistan.

Last, but not the least, I am deeply grateful to my revered mother who bore all the hardships of her widowhood with exceptional fortitude and grace while I stayed away from her for six years, at the Aleemiyah Institute, in quest of knowledge.

Imran N. Hosein

October 1, 1971

6, Main Road, Chaguanas.
Trinidad. West Indies.

PREFACE

(to second edition)

Twenty-seven long years have passed since I wrote this book in 1971 at age 29. This new edition, published by The Muslim Converts' Association of Singapore, emerged in the wake of two public lectures which I delivered on this subject in Singapore and in the Malaysian island of Penang in August 1998.

I have restricted myself, in this new edition, to minor editing of the text. But I have left the language of my youth unchanged. Editing and new comments amount to less than one percent of the total text. The reader may wish to obtain the audiocassette of my lecture on this very subject (particularly the lecture delivered in Penang) since I introduced new analysis on the subject, analysis which is not to be found in the book. The cassettes may be obtained through the publishers of this book. In fact the Muslim Converts' Association of Singapore has an extensive collection of recordings of lectures which I have delivered in Singapore over the years.

The spirit with which this book was written was one of profound respect for Gautama Buddha. In the years that have passed since I wrote the book, my respect for Gautama has remained unchanged. Buddhists of South East Asia, where this edition is being published, should find in this book much that will provoke thought. Just as important is the assurance that they will find nothing in it which, viewed objectively, should cause offense.

I gratefully acknowledge the kind assistance of members of the Muslim Students' Association of Rutgers University in New Jersey, my dear wife, Aisha, and her daughter, Nicole, who took turns in typing the manuscript for me into a computer file, and thus simplified the work of editing and printing.

I also wish to thank the Muslim Converts' Association of Singapore for publishing this book, and Br. Mohamed Nassir for all the efforts he made to have it published.

Finally, a word about that distinguished scholar, Professor Yusuf Saleem Chisti, who taught me Buddhism at the Aleemiyah Institute of Islamic Studies. I did acknowledge my debt of gratitude to him in the Preface which I wrote to the first edition of this book. Unfortunately I was already back home in Trinidad, West Indies, when the book was published in Pakistan in 1972, and I found, to my great sadness, that my acknowledgement of Prof. Chisti's input into this book did not appear in that Preface. He is now no longer in this world. But I take the opportunity, in this new edition of the book, to acknowledge my profound debt of gratitude to him, and to pray for Allah's Mercy on his soul. *Ameen!*

Imran N. Hosein

Darul Arqam,
Singapore.

January 12, 1999

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Chapter One

SOURCES OF BUDDHISM

Preliminary Observations

Gautama Buddha achieved 'enlightenment' at the age of about thirty-five. From then until he died, forty-five years later, he devoted his entire life to preaching his religious doctrines. Yet he never paid any attention to the vitally important task of recording his message in a permanent written form (i.e., as a book/scripture)

As a matter of fact, the only founder of a religious community who ever paid any proper attention to this task was Prophet Muhammad (divinely blessed is he and in eternal peace). The Qur'an enjoys the unique distinction of being the only revealed scripture in the world today which has come directly from the founder of the religious community. It is also the only original revealed scripture which has survived historical criticism in respect of its integrity, authenticity, genuineness and purity.

Gautama Buddha is the founder of Buddhism. His teachings are authoritative and binding on all Buddhists. The Buddhist is duty-bound to try and find out what were the original teachings of Buddha. If he fails in this task, and yet persists in calling himself a Buddhist, he must be honest enough to admit that what he believes in may not be the original teachings of Buddha, - nay, they may even be quite different from that which Buddha taught!

Now historical criticism has proved quite conclusively that *the original teachings of Buddha can never be known*. What is

now claimed to be his teachings may or may not be so. No one can tell. But many authorities seem to speak with one voice that the Buddhism that is presented to the world is quite different to that which Buddha preached. For example, Dr. Edward Conze, in his eminently readable book, 'Buddhism, Its Essence and Development', has this to say: *The Truth is that the oldest stratum of the existing scriptures can only be reached by uncertain inference and conjecture. One thing alone do all these attempts to reconstruct an original Buddhism have in common. They all agree that the Buddha's doctrine was certainly not what the Buddhists understood it to be. Mrs. Rhys Davids, for instance, purges Buddhism of the doctrine of 'not-self', and of monasticism. To her, some worship of 'the Man' is the original gospel of Buddhism. H.J. Jennings, in cold blood, removes all references to reincarnation from the scriptures, and claims thereby to have restored their original meaning. Dr. P. Dahlke, again, ignores all the magic and mythology with which traditional Buddhism is replete, and reduces the doctrine of the Buddha to a quite reasonable, agnostic theory.*¹

For his part Dr. Conze frankly and honestly states: *I confess that I do not know what the 'original gospel' of Buddhism was.*²

It seems that the teachings of Gautama Buddha, like the Gospel of Jesus, were preserved in the memories of their disciples. Shortly after the death of Buddha, a Council was held at Rajagaha so that the Buddha-word might be recited and agreed upon. But in this Council there were differences of opinion or, rather, conflicting memories. The Council, it appears, decided to give preference to the opinion of Kayshapa and Ananda, prominent disciples of Buddha. The very most, therefore, which later Buddhist literature can claim for their source, is the teachings of Gautama Buddha as interpreted by Kayshapa and Ananda. And even this is conceding

¹ Conze, Edward :Buddhism, Its Essence and Development, p.27

² Ibid.

too much, for, as Christmas Humphreys casually admits: *The historicity of these two Councils is impugned by certain scholars.*³ (There was a second Council at Vesali about a hundred years later).

It was not until four hundred years had passed, after the death of Buddha, that the Buddhists could overcome their misfounded trust in human memory and distrust for the written word.⁴ And even when they started writing down their doctrines and compiling their Canon, as it has come down to us, they paid scant regard to just about everything the historian requires in order to assess the authenticity, integrity, genuineness and original purity of a document. Dr. Conze remarks: *Buddhism is a body of traditions in which few names stand out, and in which fewer dates are precisely known. It is indeed most exasperating when we try to apply our current ideas of historical criticism. Langlois and Seignobos in their textbook of historical method, state that "a document whose author, date and provenance⁵ cannot be determined, is just good for nothing."* Dr. Conze goes on to remark sadly: *Alas, that is the case with most of the documents on which we build a history of Buddhism.*⁶

Pali Literature

The most important of the Pali texts, so important, in fact, that it may be taken as the Bible of Buddhism, is the *Tri-pitaka*. It is generally conceded to be among the earliest recorded Buddhist literature and is placed at the 1st Century B.C. *It therefore depends on a long, prior, oral tradition.*

The *Tri-pitaka*, or three baskets of law, is composed of three books:

³ Humphreys, Christmas: Buddhism, p.45

⁴ Conze, Op. cit., p.29

⁵ ie., the source from which it has come.

⁶ Conze, Ibid.

(i) Vinaya Pitaka- 'Rules of conduct.' This is the book of discipline. The original Buddhism was, *par excellence*, the Buddhism of the *Bhikshus* (monks) who lived the monastic life to be trained for preaching and disseminating the religious teachings of Gautama Buddha. This monastic life had to be strictly ordered. The *Vinaya Pitaka* deals, in the main, with the 'rules of the order'

(ii) Sutta Pitaka- 'Discourses'. The *Sutta Pitaka* is a collection of the sermons and discourses of Gautama Buddha and incidents in his life. It is, perhaps, the most important of the *Pitakas* as a source-book of Buddhist doctrine. It consists of five divisions known as *Nikayas*.

Gautama Buddha was essentially an ethical thinker. The Buddhist ethics is enshrined in its most famous form in the Pali text, the *Dhammapada*⁷ (the path of virtue). In fact the *Dhammapada* may well rank as the most famous of all the Pali literature. It is composed entirely of aphorisms and short pithy statements conveying truths of great import with respect to the spiritual uplift of man.

(iii) Abhidhamma- 'Analysis of Doctrine'. This third basket is the basket of metaphysical doctrines. It is generally known as the Buddhist metaphysics. But, in particular, it formed the foundation of the *Realist* schools of the Buddhist Philosophy (*Sautrantika*, or Critical Realism, and *Vaibhashika*, or Direct Realism).⁸

According to a leading authority on Buddhism, Mrs. Rhys Davids, the *Abhidhamma* is nothing more than *an analytical and logical elaboration of what is already given (i.e., in the first two pitakas)*. It contains analyses and expositions of Buddhist doctrines.

⁷ Its complete English translation can be found in Radhakrishnan and Moore: Source-book of Indian Philosophy, pp. 292-325

⁸ Chatterjee and Datta: An Introduction to Indian Philosophy, p.176

Sanskrit Literature

While Pali was used or almost monopolized by the *Hinayana* sect of Buddhism, Sanskrit was preferred by their *Mahayana* rivals. We may also note that their attitudes to their scriptures show a marked contrast. The *Hinayana* scriptures (*Tri-Pitaka*, for example) simply present an account, both historical and analytical, of the Buddha and Buddhist teachings and precepts. The *Mahayana* school, on the other hand, shows a distinct tendency to ascribe sacred propensities to the texts.⁹

The Sanskrit texts (of *Mahayana*) it appears, have not been reduced to a collection or a Canon (as in Pali).¹⁰ Much of the original Sanskrit literature has now been lost. Fortunately some of them were translated into other languages (mostly Chinese). They are preserved in Chinese and are now being retranslated into their original Sanskrit.

The most famous work in Sanskrit, the *Mahavastu*, has been restored from its Chinese translation. The *Mahavastu* (which literally means 'sublime story') consists of a voluminous collection of legendary stories.

Lalitavistara, another Sanskrit text, discovered by Prof. Hodgson, is regarded as one of the holiest of the Sanskrit texts. It belongs to the 1st century A.C., that is, some 500 years after Buddha, and contains all the miracles which the superstition-loving folk had fathered on an obliging Buddha over this long stretch of time.

⁹ Cf. Ninian Smart:: Article on Buddhism in Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, Vol.1,p.419

¹⁰ Humphreys, Christmas:Buddhism, p.237.

Chapter Two

THE LIFE OF BUDDHA

There are three Gautama Buddhas, namely:

- i. Historical Buddha.
- ii. Transcendental Buddha.
- iii. Mythological Buddha.

In this chapter we shall restrict our discussion to 'the historical Buddha'. He was born about 560 B.C.¹¹ His family name was Gautama and his given name was *Siddhartha* (i.e., one who has accomplished his aim). He was also called *Sakyamuni* (i.e., the sage of the tribe of Sakya) and he called himself *Tathagata* (he who has arrived at the truth). He was born in the village of Lumbini near Kapilavastu,¹² the capital of a subordinate kingdom south of the Himalayas, ruled by his father, Raja *Suddhodana*. His mother's name was *Mahamaya*.

Legend has it that an astrologer foretold to his father, the king, that young Gautama would forsake the throne and the royal life, would renounce the world and lead the life of a wandering ascetic on the day when he would see four things:

¹¹ Some say 800 B.C. Some go as far in the other direction as 200 B.C. When we give names, dates and other historical data, let it be remembered that we do not do so on the authority of any text which can survive historical criticism. There is no such text in Buddhism. All our dates, etc., therefore, can amount to nothing more than 'plausible guesswork'.

¹² Some Muslim scholars have attempted to identify Kapil with Dhul Kifl of the Qur'an, 'f' being used in Kifl since there is no 'p' in Arabic. Allah knows best.

an old man,

a sick man,

a diseased man

a dead man.

The king built a special palace to which young Gautama was confined. Therein he was provided with all the worldly pleasures he could possibly desire. There were dancing and singing girls, games, good food, etc. But he was forbidden to leave the palace. When he had come of age he was married to the beautiful Yasoddhra who had caught his eye from among the host of belles the king had presented to the reluctant, pensive youth. As was customary at that time, the Prince had to engage in open competition in the manly sports to 'prove his mettle' and 'win his spurs' before he could win the hand of the fair maid. Legend has it that he gave a more than creditable account of himself¹³.

When Gautama was 29 years of age he saw, on the same day, an old man, a sick man, a diseased man and a dead man. The impact of the 'dark side' of life was so great on him that on that very night he renounced the world and left his wife and baby-son secretly, donning the robes of the wandering ascetic. It is said that he spent some six years in his quest for truth, - a quest which was born when he came face to face with the fact of suffering.

He studied the sacred lore of the Hindus and practiced the Hindu disciplines and exercises but found no answer to the burning problems of his life. Similarly he passed through Jainism. He practiced rigorous fasting and went through a period of extreme self-mortification (which he found to be damaging). Still he attained no enlightenment. He finally gave up his rigorous exercises

¹³ Arnold, Sir Edwin: *The Light of Asia*. The most beautiful account of the life of Buddha I have read!

(and in the process lost the five disciples who had clung to him) and returned to his common sense to take up his begging bowl and resume the life of the wandering mendicant. Six years of search, along the two most widely recognized roads to salvation known to India, philosophic meditation and bodily asceticism, had yielded no results.¹⁴

In refusing to continue his self-mortification, Gautama had realized that whatever truth a man may reach is reached best by a nourished brain in a healthy body. Such a conception was absolutely foreign to the ideas of the land and age.¹⁵

Gautama was now thrown back on his own resources and it was not long before he sighted his goal as he sat rapt in meditation under a Bodhi tree. He passed through different stages of meditation until finally he attained 'enlightenment' and saw, with the spiritual eye, the answers to all the problems which were consuming his soul. Thus he came to be known as Gautama, the Buddha (or the enlightened one).

After this he spent the next forty-five years of his life in preaching to mankind the truths he had discovered. His first sermon was delivered at Sarnath (a city close to Banaras in India which the author visited in 1971). Here he expounded the famous **four noble truths** that all is suffering (*dukht*), it has a cause (*tanha*), this cause can be removed, and there is a method by which it can be removed. This method consists in following the **noble eight-fold path** of right views, right resolve, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right endeavour, right thinking and right meditation.

Gautama Buddha spent the rest of his life in ministering to

¹⁴ Brelvi, Mahmud: Islam and its Contemporary Faiths, p.68. His chapter on Buddhism is short and terse, but suffers from a complete absence of documentation.

¹⁵ Wells, H.G.: Outline of History, p.390.

the moral needs of mankind, travelling from city to city bare-footed, clean-headed, and with nothing more than his saffron robe, his walking stick, and his begging bowl. He died in 480 B.C. at the age of eighty.

Chapter Three

BACKGROUND OF GAUTAMA'S MISSION

Buddhism is essentially a revolt against the falsehoods, evils and tyrannies of the Hinduism of the 5th century B.C. Hindu writers seem very eager to overlook this point. It is quite possible that Hinduism, in one or more of its many strains, emerged in history as authentic religion founded on revealed truth. It must certainly have been monotheistic. Over a period of time that truth was corrupted with polytheism and idolatry. The corruption of truth led, in turn, to the corruption of values.

Man is essentially a moral being, and the primary objective of religion is to build the character and moral personality of the individual, and through the individual, mankind at large. Hinduism had completely lost sight of this objective and had replaced character building with idol-worship and ritualism as ends-in-themselves. Secondly, Hinduism had robbed the individual of his freedom and individuality (except where he was a Brahman) and had chained him in the rigid fetters of the caste-system, - the institution which forms, and must form, the corner-stone of that system of dominance which is the Hindu social order.

Buddha arose to set the perspective aright. It was because of this background that he confined his teachings to ethics and refused to discuss metaphysics (with which India was already oversaturated). Only thus can we possibly understand and explain his silence about the problem of the existence or non-existence of God. It may be, also, that because India was (and still is) seeped in idol-worship and in the worship of thousands of gods and goddesses,

the reversion from such rank polytheism, naked anthropomorphism and animistic idolatry¹⁶ to a monotheism might have been too sudden a step. Perhaps it was necessary that the slate be first wiped clean. Hence Buddha remained silent on the question of God. (He did not deny the existence of God!). Similarly he remained silent in respect of a transcendental dimension of existence (i.e., the unseen world) for, on being questioned as to what would be the life of the Buddhist who attained *Nirvana* (salvation), he responded with the analogy of a flame. He asked: what becomes of a flame after it is extinguished?

The revolt against Hinduism is enshrined in the movement of the religious consciousness from a stagnant and slavish 'dependence' in Hinduism, to a free and dynamic 'self-dependence' in Buddhism. In fact Buddha's parting words to his disciples before he died were:

All component things are subject to decay. Work out your own salvation with diligence!

This revolt also found expression in Buddha's scathing denunciation of ritualism and sacrifice. Similarly he declared the Vedas and Vedic teachings to be quite useless!

The second point to note is that Buddha, like Muhammad (s) and Jesus (s) set the individual free. Anyone can attain salvation. Salvation is not restricted to the priestly caste of Brahmans who monopolized the reading of the sacred writings and who poured molten lead into the ears of every *Sudra* who dared overhear their reading! Buddha gave the Brahmans a slap in the face, which found a resounding echo in the harsh and bitter condemnation of the Jew-

¹⁶ It is interesting to note that despite the passage of over 2,500 years and the strong impact of Islam, polytheism and idol-worship still persist in India to this day. Indeed the very virulence with which ancient idolatry persists in India indicates that it is destined to play a final inglorious role in this the last stage of history.

ish Rabbis, Scribes and the Pharisees by Jesus (s) and Muhammad (s). Buddha, in fact, did away with the inhuman caste-system and opened the doors of religion to the lowest of the low.

Hinduism exerted two influences on Buddha, one negative, the other positive. We have discussed the former. Let us now briefly discuss the latter. The positive influence of Hinduism on Buddha was such that in its basic characteristics it was and is virtually an offshoot of Hinduism.¹⁷

The uniquely Hindu doctrines of *Karma* and *Awa Gawan* (reincarnation and transmigration of souls) which form the foundation of the Hindu philosophy of religion, were accepted by Buddha and absorbed into Buddhism (though in a modified form). We shall discuss these doctrines in the fifth Chapter, which deals with Buddhist philosophy.

¹⁷ Thus writes Dr. F. R. Ansari in his powerful and terse booklet: Which Religion?, p. 9.

Chapter Four

THE BASIC TEACHINGS OF GAUTAMA BUDDHA

Basically, and originally, Gautama Buddha was emphatically an ethical thinker. His teachings were, in the main, ethical. It is these we shall discuss here.

Suffering

Just as all Christian theology revolves around the 'figment of sin'¹⁸ so too does all Buddhist theology revolves around the 'fact of *suffering*'. After spending some six years in his quest for truth, Buddha arrived at the conclusion that 'all is suffering!' (*sarvan dukham*). Since this is the corner-stone on which the entire structure of Buddhism is founded, we may be excused for dwelling on it for a while.

We propose to investigate this statement from two different standpoints, the first: a critical analysis, the second: a sympathetic understanding.

Now 'suffering' is, and must always be, associated with 'feeling' and 'emotion'. We shall hardly be disposed to name as 'suffering' that which is not accompanied by some 'feeling'

¹⁸ According to Islam, sin is an acquisition and not a heritage. The Prophet of Islam declared that every child is born free from sin, that is, with a clean and pure moral constitution. It is only a perverted, intellectually dishonest, and morally under-developed personality which can conceive of a baby as having a basically sinful constitution inherited from the 'original sin' of Adam!!

of pain or 'emotion' of grief. In this sense of the word, it is clearly an over-statement to say that 'all is suffering'. We all experience the 'feeling' of pleasure and the 'emotion' of joy and happiness. Indeed, no one can deny having experienced joy and happiness. It may not have been in the measure, or for as long as one would have liked. But while it is there it is *real*, and when it is gone it is treasured in memories, not as something which was unreal, but rather as something which was as real as the suffering which may have proceeded or followed it. We shall have to rewrite all our psychology textbooks if we wish to deny the 'feeling' of pleasure and the 'emotion' of happiness.

But it may be that Buddha did not use the word *dukht* in this sense, the psychological sense. Perhaps he meant it as an intellectual assessment of 'the life of the world' as a whole. Now, without a metaphysics to support him, Buddha would face difficulty to project this, his fundamental teaching, as anything more than his own personal viewpoint. For, 'all is suffering' would be a universal *judgement* and, as such, it presupposes a standpoint, a criterion, and a world-view. It rests on a statement of the meaning, purpose and destiny of, not only human life, but all life. Is the world a moral order (or immoral, or amoral)? Consciously or unconsciously, 'all is suffering' must rest on a metaphysics. It is Buddha's shortcoming that he did not work out metaphysics. Without this metaphysics his judgement cannot but be relative. We all have our different outlooks towards life and our different goals in life. *Joy and suffering, pleasure and pain would be relative to our individual readings of the world and our individual goals in life.*

Thus even with this interpretation of *dukht*, 'all is suffering' is indefensible.

Let us now proceed to a sympathetic understanding of Buddha's statement. We have not been able to find any literature on this subject, i.e., 'the psychological background of the fundamental statement of Buddhism', and our own knowledge of psychology is limited.

It is an undeniable fact that different people view the same world differently. The identical environment may be heaven in the estimation of one person and hell in the view of another.

Now, the facts are as follows: Buddha's moral consciousness was highly developed, and the more highly-developed and refined the moral personality, the more is the pain and suffering that it has to endure, and the more sensitive must it be to the pain and suffering of others. It was, perhaps, Buddha's sensitivity to the moral degradation of mankind, the evils present on earth, the ephemeral nature of the mundane joys to which men cling, and the inevitability of decay and death, that led him on the sweeping statement: 'all is suffering'.

Secondly, all Buddhists are agreed that Buddha's *development* from infancy through childhood and adolescence to adulthood (to the age of 29 to be precise), was *abnormal*. In fact, he is the only person, perhaps in the whole history of mankind, who was deliberately kept away from the fact of suffering until he was 29 years of age. As we have previously noted ¹⁹ he was kept away from the view of old age, sickness, disease and death. And, to make matters worse, this abnormality was supplemented with another abnormality. He was fed up to his throat, so to say, with the joys of this world, dancing and singing girls, good food and drink, luxurious clothes, joyful sports, and as pleasant and beautiful an abode and environment as the royal purse could afford. He was, in fact, confined in a cage of happiness!

At the age of 29 he came into contact with the real world, with the fact of suffering which he never knew before, and, what is just as important, with the ephemeral nature of the joys and happiness which he, up till then, believed to be real and permanent. *It was only natural that this should give rise to an abnormal impact of the reality of suffering and unreality of happiness on the mind of the disillusioned young man. We believe this to be the fundamen-*

¹⁹ See pages 6-7

tal psychological explanation for the over-emphasis on suffering on which Buddha founded his religion!

‘All is suffering’ constitutes the first of the famous ‘**four noble truths**’, which form, with the ‘**noble eight-fold path**’, the very essence of Buddhism.

Desire

In analysing ‘suffering’, Buddha found that it had a cause, and that was ‘desire’ (*tanha*). In its technical sense Buddha used *tanha* to stand for ‘the desire and craving for life’. This is the second of the ‘four noble truths’.

Now, if *tanha* is taken in its general sense to mean desire as such, it is obvious that all desires do not lead to suffering. It is only wrong desires or desires in a wrong measure, which lead to suffering. The Qur’an, for example, asks mankind to restrain the desires of the baser self²⁰- not all desires. It is the desire of the baser self which, as a matter of fact, really leads to suffering.

As we noticed earlier, *tanha* has a technical sense, ‘the desire and craving for life’. We shall examine it critically when we discuss the theory of ‘dependent origination’ in the chapter on ‘Buddhist Philosophy’.

The third of the noble truths states that, not only has suffering a cause, *tanha*, but this cause can be removed, and ought to be removed. If the cause is present, the effect will arise! Do away with the cause, the effect will vanish! But the total negation of desire is just not possible, for, in the words of Dr. Ansari, *it turns human beings into stones. It is only stones who may be conceived to have no desires. As regards human beings, desire*

²⁰ Ref: *وَلَا تَتَّبِعِ الْهَوَىَٰ* and follow not (i.e., restrain the ego from) lower desires. (Qur’an: 38:26).

is the first and foremost condition of their activity and the most vital foundation of their progress. Dr. Ansari concludes by declaring that: *In the domain of moral philosophy, the doctrine of the total negation of all desire is a hopeless doctrine.*²¹

Finally, Buddha expounds the method through which *tanha* can be eliminated. This method is the observance of the ‘**Noble Eight-Fold Path**’ (*ariya atthangika magga*). This path is the fourth of the ‘**four noble truths**’ of Buddhism.

The Noble Eight-Fold Path

The first thing one has to do is to understand and accept the ‘**four noble truths**’. This is called *Right Views*.

After we have accepted the ‘**four noble truths**’, we should resolve to transform our life in the light of their teachings. Renunciation of the world takes precedence. This constitutes *right resolve or aspiration*.

Next comes the practical and concrete manifestation of this effort to transform ourselves. The first step is that we must learn to guard our tongue from slander, back-biting, idle gossip, falsehoods, etc. This is the stage called *right speech*.

When taken even further, this involves guarding our entire behaviour, not just speech. We have now reached the stage of over-all conduct. Buddha insists that it must be checked, moulded and sustained as *right conduct*.

But all this effort will go to waste if we pursue a wrong means of livelihood. Our means of sustenance must not be illegal or immoral. They must be good and pure and permissible. This constitutes *right livelihood*.

²¹ Ansari, Op. cit., p. 12

Next comes *right endeavour*. No matter how high we may rise in our moral progress as moral agents, the fact remains that we are always subject to attacks (on our moral constitution) both from within and from without. The wrong habits and the effects of evil deeds of our past life lie submerged in the 'subconscious' or the 'unconscious' and, if we are to believe Freud, they can and do play an important role in motivating our conscious behaviour. We must always be on guard to inhibit them if they should threaten our moral personality.

Secondly, the evils and temptations of the outside world are always knocking at our door, and sometimes if we should even innocently open our door, temptation would walk right in and close the door behind him/her.

Right endeavour is really a defense mechanism of preparedness to fight these challenges to our moral integrity, both from within and without, so that the fruits achieved till then in our moral struggle may not go waste and be lost.

Right thinking is really right remembering. We must never allow ourselves to forget the truths we have already learnt. Rather, we must be constantly revolving them in the mind so that we may derive a sustained benefit from those truths.

One such truth, according to Buddhism, is the *filthiness of the human body*, which is nothing more than a piece of skin stretched over such impurities as:

hairs of the head, hairs of the body, nails, teeth, skin, muscles, sinews, bones, marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, serous membranes, spleen, lungs, intestines, mesentery, stomach, excrement, brain, bile, digestive juices, pus, blood, grease, fat, tears, sweat, spittle, snot, fluid of the joints, urine.

A frame of mind developed on such thoughts can act as a powerful defense-mechanism for meeting all the wiles that Jezebel²² and her consorts may plan for the innocent celibate.

Finally we come to the last stage of *right meditation or right concentration*.

Right concentration, through four stages, is the last step in the path that leads to the goal - *Nirvana*.

(i) The first stage of concentration is on reasoning and investigation regarding the truths. This gives rise to the joy of pure thinking.

(ii) The second stage of concentration is unruffled mediation, free from reasoning, etc. There is, then, a joy of tranquillity.

(iii) The third stage of concentration is detachment from even the joy of tranquillity. But though there may be indifference to the joy of concentration, still a feeling of bodily ease persists.

(iv) The fourth stage of concentration is detachment from this bodily ease as well. The state that is attained thereafter is that of perfect equanimity and indifference. This, according to Chatterjee and Datta, is the state of *nirvana*, or perfect wisdom.²³

Nirvana

Now the very important question arises: what is *nirvana*? It is very important that we should have a clear understanding of

²² Symbolising a 'provocative, devilish woman'.

²³ Vide: Chatterjee and Datta: An Introduction to Indian Philosophy.

nirvana, for it constitutes the goal of life in Buddhism, and unless one knows exactly what is his goal in life one can hardly be expected to pursue a sustained and integrated effort to achieve that goal.

At the very outset it may be said that no one can say with certainty as to what is *nirvana*! There are a number of conflicting interpretations. According to Poussin it is a happy state, pure annihilation, an inconceivable existence, or a changeless state.²⁴ Dasgupta says it is *a hopeless task to explain Nibbana (nirvana) in terms of worldly experience, and there is no way in which we can better indicate it than by saying that it is a cessation of all sorrow.*²⁵

Buddhist thought has found this problem to be particularly knotty. A distinction was drawn between two phases of *nirvana*, i.e., *nirvana* with substrate and *nirvana* without substrate. The saint who has attained *nirvana* lives on with a substrate, that is, the physical and mental state, which constitutes him as an individual. It is when the saint dies that the real problem arises. Does he or does he not survive death? Buddha refused to answer this question. This is important, for it implies that neither personal nor impersonal immortality has any place in Buddhist theology, and on the question of immortality Buddhism must leave a 'blank'. Of course, we are free to speculate what is the answer to the unanswered question. But that speculation cannot be elevated to the rank of a doctrine.

Our own reading is as follows: it cannot be disputed that Buddha himself must be believed to have attained what he calls *nirvana*, and that having already attained *nirvana* he was asked: 'What is *nirvana*?' His answer concerning the extinguishing of the flame can be interpreted to mean that the saint ceases to exist in

²⁴ Dasgupta:History of Indian Philosophy, Vol.1, p. 108.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 109

the psychological sense. The individual 'I', or the empirical 'I', is psychologically annihilated or, rather, submerged. What remains is transcendental and, being so, is outside the scope of Buddhist teachings. *Nirvana*, then, would be that state which, when achieved, assumes the psychological conclusion of 'death to self' and 'life in an unknown which is beyond self'. If this interpretation is correct, it displays a remarkable similarity to the Qur'anic ideal where the individual self, instead of being destroyed, instead of a passive passing away, is said to be 'bought'²⁶ by Allah. Here, as in Buddhism, it would be a psychological sale (and a psychological state) and not extinction.

So much then for our observations, but the fact remains that the Buddhist has only two avenues open to him, both of which are unsatisfactory. Either he conceives of the state of *nirvana* (after death) to be the extinction of the self, - the passage to non-existence, or he frankly and honestly admits that he knows not what is *nirvana*. On both these counts *nirvana* cannot function as the supreme goal in life. If it be the passage to extinction then the goal of life would be to put an end to life. Such would constitute a thoroughly frightening proposition for those who care for human happiness. But it could be used as an admirably effective tool in the hands of the despotic dictator, the exploiting industrialist and landlord, and the imperialists who seek to perpetuate their control over the nice, unconcerned Buddhists. And, on the other hand, if *nirvana* is unknowable then it cannot function at all as the goal of life.

We shall see later how the Buddhists escaped this predicament by turning Buddhism upside down.²⁷

²⁶ ^{إن الله اشترى من المؤمنين ... هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ.} Surely Allah hath purchased of the believers their persons and their goods; for theirs (in return) is the garden (of paradise)..... And who is more faithful to his covenant than Allah? Then rejoice in the bargain which ye have concluded: That is the achievement supreme. (Qur'an: 9:111)

²⁷ See *Mahayana* doctrines in Chapter Seven: 'The Religious Schools of Buddhism'.

This constitutes a discussion on the **Four Noble Truths**, the **Noble Eight-Fold Path** and *nirvana*, which constitute, in fact, the essence of Buddhism.

Chapter Five

THE BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY

As Buddhist thought evolved, it found expression in a wide range of philosophical positions despite the earnest attempt of the Buddha himself to avoid philosophy. This philosophical evolution of Buddhist thought came about because of two factors. Firstly, Buddha himself unwittingly laid down the foundation of a philosophical system. Secondly, the Buddhists had to *justify Buddha's teachings, defend it from the severe criticism it had to face in India and outside, and convert other thinkers to their faith.*²⁸

In so far as we can categorize the philosophical teachings of Buddha, we find them to contain the germs of the following philosophical schools:

Pragmatism

Because Buddhist doctrine is really a doctrine of salvation, Buddhists have been intensely practical regarding all matters pertaining to salvation. The value of a thought, idea or doctrine is to be judged, in their view, on the scale of salvation. If it is relevant to salvation it becomes a truth. If it is irrelevant to salvation it is thrown out of the window as useless! This, surely, is paying heed to the parting words of Buddha:

Work out your own salvation with diligence!

²⁸ Chatterjee and Datta : Op. cit., p. 161

This is pragmatism, wherein the truth of a doctrine lies in its practical utility.

Dialectical Pragmatism

As with Hegel, Buddhist philosophy says of every enquiry into truth or reality that it must land the enquirer into contradictions. Kant also refers to antinomies of pure reason, but in his philosophy they are limited to four. For Buddhist philosophy, pure reason, when applied to reality, leads us always to antinomies or contradictions. This, therefore, is the *dialectical nature of Buddhist philosophy*.

*All views about ultimate reality involve contradictions. The only thing can be said of reality is that it is void.*²⁹

Psychology

Buddhist effort is directed primarily to gaining control of the mind, - of the mental processes, by meditating on them. In consequence Buddhist thought is impregnated with what we call psychology. In fact, as Prof. Brelvi says, salvation in Buddhism is 'focused upon redemption by *psychological self-culture*'³⁰. The psychology of *nirvana* would, we believe, be an extremely interesting field of study if the psychological *nirvana* we referred to earlier (see pp. 19-20) be accepted as a plausible interpretation.³¹

Buddhist psychology is spotlighted in another sphere in its analysis of the empirical self. It is outstanding, original and provocative but, in the absence of a metaphysics, it is incomplete.

²⁹ See Nagarjuna's views on p. 41

³⁰ Brelvi, Mahmud: Islam and its Contemporary Faiths, p.70

³¹ The only book on the subject seems to be that of Johanssen: The Psychology of Nirvana.

We shall enter into an elaborate discussion on this subject in a short while.

Positivism

Buddha rose in arms against the over-speculative Hindu philosophy. Our thoughts should be confined to this world! That which cannot be positively demonstrated (three-fourth of Hinduism) cannot be accepted as knowledge. This position is now known as positivism.

Phenomenalism

Like Kant, Buddha taught that we can have knowledge only of the phenomena we experience. Of that which lies beyond phenomena, namely, the 'noumena', the 'thing in itself', we can never know. This is called *phenomenalism*.

Empiricism

As Buddha demonstrated in his own life, experience is the source of knowledge.

The Philosophical Implications of Buddha's Ethical Teachings

I-Dependent Origination:

The corner-stone on which the Buddhist philosophy is built is the *theory of dependent origination*. What this theory in fact states is that no object or event is independent in respect of its mundane existence, or its appearance. All objects are dependent for their existence, or appearance, on other objects, - all events on other events. There is a causal connection running through all things, such that *a* is the cause of *b*, and *b* is the cause of *c*, and *c* is the cause of *d*, etc. This theory states that all is *contingent* and nothing is *necessary*. It therefore leaves no room for a self-existent, self-subsistent reality

or the God of Islam. It also rules out, on the other hand, *nihilism*, or the theory that something existing can be annihilated or can cease to be. Buddha therefore claims to hold the middle view that *everything that we perceive possesses an existence that is dependent on something else, and that thing, in turn, does not perish without leaving some cause.*³²

Buddha applied this philosophical theory to his theology and traced the cause of suffering through some twelve intermediary stages or links until he arrived at the last cause, *the will to live or the clinging to life*. This is the technical meaning of the term *tanha* referred to earlier (p.15). The cause being ‘the clinging to life’, the effect, he summarily concludes, is ‘life itself’, i.e., birth with its attendant suffering. Chatterjee and Datta consider this to be very important contribution of Buddhism, namely, *the conception that the external phenomenon of life or the living organism is due to an internal impetus of desire, conscious or unconscious.*³³ This, they assert, anticipates the Bergsonian *elan vital*.

Both the philosophical theory and, what we call its theological application, are defective. The Scottish philosopher, David Hume, has shown very conclusively that there is no necessary relation between ‘cause’ and ‘effect’ such that, given the former, the latter must appear.

Islam makes a different use of the law of causality than Buddhism. For Buddhism, the causal law is absolute and universal. There is, therefore, a necessary relation between cause and effect. Islam makes causality relative to the spatio-temporal dimension of existence. This is possible because Islam is founded on belief in the existence of an unseen world which transcends causality. Also, even within this spatio-temporal dimension of existence, Islam accommodates a divine participation both in

³² Chatterjee and Datta: Op. cit., p. 153

³³ Ibid. p.140

nature and in human affairs. This does not, however, affect the practical utility of the law of causality in the hands of the Muslim scientist!

Secondly, and this is very important, the universal law of causation, even if affirmed despite the troublesome Scot, can only be affirmed within the framework of observable phenomena. Take it beyond or before this and we enter into the region of guesswork. That which precedes life is beyond our observation. Hence the theological application of this theory is defective. The jump from 'clinging to life', as the cause, to 'birth' as the effect, just cannot be proved. It cannot be admitted as more than a mere hypothesis, and a very far-fetched one too! And even as a hypothesis, it fails to answer the most vital question of 'the origin of life'. That which can end, must also have begun sometime.

What, in fact, the *elan vital* of Bergson, or the 'clinging to life' of Buddha, can explain, is the phenomenon of social and individual survival in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds threatening death or extinction. 'Clinging to life' is an exclusively human phenomenon. It cannot be applied to nature. Nature functions according to immutable laws. It is in man alone, through the agency of the self-directed human will, that the possibility of clinging to life in the matrix of suffering can arise.

II-Karma:

The theory of *Karma* (which Buddha borrowed from Hinduism) is the moral application of the theory of dependent origination. It is an inexorable, immutable law of justice and moral retribution which states, in as many words, that every single act has its necessary, inescapable consequence, be it for better or for worse. As the *Dhammapada* puts it:

Neither in the sky, nor in the midst of the sea, nor by entering

into the clefts of mountains, is there known a place on earth where, stationing himself, a man can escape from (the consequences of) his evil deed."³⁴

There can be no relaxation to this law, for the slightest deviation will break down the structure of causal necessity which runs through the theory of dependent origination.

Together with the theory of *karma* there is also the theory of the transmigration of souls (another Hindu loan to Buddhism).³⁵ Not only does *karma* govern this life but, also, our previous lives. In fact, in accordance with the manner in which we lived our previous life, *karma* determines in what station or status we shall be reborn in this life. A good past life may earn for us the reward of being born as a human being. Invariably the animal life was the punishment for those who fell below human qualification. It becomes difficult in such a society to argue the case for the prevention of cruelty to animals. Of course, the thought that a donkey may be your dead uncle may deter you from beating it. But, by the same token, you cannot object to a man beating a dog and defending himself on the ground that whoever the dog may be, that person must have lived a very evil life to have been reborn as a dog - and so he/it deserves punishment!⁽³⁵⁾

The defect of the theory of *karma* is that it can easily give rise to the problem of despair if faithfully believed in and applied to the ups and downs of the moral struggle. Despair, in turn, destroys the psychological drive or impetus, which must be present for healthy participation in the moral struggle.

Islam solves the problem of despair with its concept of Allah,

³⁴ Radhakrishnan and Moore: Op. cit. p.302.

³⁵ Strangely enough this doctrine also found its way into Greek thought. Pythagoras supported it so firmly that the Greeks made fun of him. Once, they say, he (Pythagoras) was passing by when a dog was being ill-treated. "Stop", he said, "don't hit it! It is the soul of a friend! I knew it when I heard its voice". (Xenophanes).

Who is full Compassion and Mercy³⁶ and Who Himself proclaims to sinners:

قُلْ يَا عِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِن رَّحْمَةِ اللَّهِ. إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا، إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ.

*Say: Oh my Servants who have transgressed against their souls, despair not of the Mercy of Allah: for Allah forgives all sins (i.e., on sincere repentance and amendment of conduct): for He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.*³⁷

Secondly, Islam provides the psychological impetus for healthy, vigorous participation in the moral struggle with its system of rewards and punishments (heaven and hell) which does not remain confined within the limits of a mathematically-computerized exactitude (as in *karma*) but which is balanced in favour of rewards for the good:

مَنْ جَاءَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ فَلَهُ عَشْرُ مَثَالِهَا، وَمَنْ جَاءَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ فَلَا يُجْزَى إِلَّا مِثْلُهَا.

*He who does good shall have ten times as much to his credit; and he that does evil shall not be recompensed except according to his evil.*³⁸

The basic defect of Buddhist ethics is that it lacks metaphysics. It ignores man's emotional nature, his religious consciousness. Man, in his moral struggle, craves for a source of unfailing hope and

³⁶ In the name of Allah, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful. (Qur'an: 1:2)

³⁷ Abdullah Yusuf Ali: Translation and Commentary of the Qur'an, (39:53).

³⁸ Ibid., (6:160).

comfort. This can only be provided with the concept of a compassionate, loving, forgiving God who is full of grace, and with a system of rewards and punishments balanced in favour of good. *Islam*, and *Islam* alone, provides both. Buddhism provided neither and has paid the penalty of being turned upside down by unassuming Buddhists who today worship even idols and statues of Buddha, and the gods of Hindudom!

The theory of *transmigration of souls*, as found in Buddhism, is quite puzzling. *Transmigration of souls* normally involves the transference of a soul-substance from one body (which is now dead) to another body (which has just been born). But there is no such transference in the Buddhist theory. The Buddhist conceives of himself as a pre-existent moral entity, which died in a previous existence, and transferred its moral status to that conglomeration of *skandas*³⁹ which he calls himself. Had moral perfection been achieved there would have been no transfer. The very fact of his existence, therefore, casts a slur on the aboriginal purity and status of his moral personality.

The purpose of his life, and all his lives to come, is to achieve *nirvana* or deliverance from the recurring cycle of birth and the suffering to which birth gives rise. But the theory of *transmigration of souls*, with its accompanied theory of *karma*, falls to the ground when we ponder over the fact that *we have no way of remembering the pitfalls of our previous life because of which we have landed ourselves into this life*. Of what use is another life if we can unknowingly repeat all the mistakes of the previous life? Dr. Ansari has made a devastating attack on this theory. We quote him at length:

This theory, however, does not stand the test of reason. In the first instance, to realise that a person is suffering or benefiting on any particular occasion in this life because of action performed

³⁹ *Scanda*: an incongruous transitory element.

in a previous life on this earth, it is necessary that every human being should have a complete picture of his supposed previous life at all moments and on all occasions. Otherwise, the purpose of his re-birth would be defeated. But no such picture exists in the mind of any human being. Secondly, if we pick up an immature seed from a tree and wish to get a tree from that seed in spite of its immaturity, we never paste or pin that seed back on the tree. Rather, we try to get the best of the seed by providing better manure and better conditions. Similar is the case with the human personality. When a human being leaves this world without achieving that purity and maturity which is necessary for salvation, nature should not and would not paste and pin him again on the tree of earthly life but should provide for him conditions whereby his impurity and immaturity may be remedied and he may be able to proceed on the path of evolution. Thirdly, evolution is an established law of the human personality as well as of the universe. But evolution is always linear and never cyclic. Hence on this score also the theory of salvation through transmigration of souls is unacceptable.”⁴⁰

The reader would be astonished to learn that Prophet Muhammad (s) has prophesied the emergence of a last stage of history when Allah will release *Dajjal*, the False Messiah, into the world. *Dajjal* has a two-fold mission. Firstly, he will deceive the Jews in the greatest act of deception history will ever witness. In consequence of being deceived by *Dajjal* the Jews will establish the Zionist Movement and embark on an effort to restore the State of Israel in the holy land of Palestine. In the process of doing so they will commit such betrayal of Truth and such vile acts as would earn for them the most awesome divine punishment ever visited upon any people in all history.

But *Dajjal* will pursue a second mission as well, and that would be to seek to deceive all the rest of mankind and lead them down the road of godlessness, decadence, destitution,

⁴⁰ Ansari, Op.cit. pp. 8-9

anarchy, universal corruption, sexual perversity, etc. One of his tricks would be to persuade mankind to worship him instead of Allah. In order to capture the adoration and worship of mankind he would create a civilization which would perform such astonishing feats as would sweep mankind off their feet. The Prophet (s) prophesied that *Dajjal* would lay claim to being able to bring the dead back to life, i.e., the dead would be reborn. He said:

And with him (i.e., Dajjal) there would be raised shayateen (i.e., disbelieving jinn) who will assume the appearance of the dead, would speak to the living (in the voice of the dead and with the memory of the dead): don't you recognise me? I am your father! (or) I am your brother! (or) some close relative.

(Kanz al-Ummal Vol 7, Hadith No 2078).

The Prophet (s) has therefore prophesied the emergence of an age in which there will astonishing evidence which would appear to validate the Hindu and Buddhist theory of rebirth and transmigration of souls. My view is that the phenomenon of cloning, which has recently emerged in the world of science (1997), will eventually result in the emergence of human clones. From there it would only one more step to the claim of bringing the dead back to life. I expect this prophecy to be fulfilled by, perhaps, the year 2020. When it is fulfilled Muslims who are faithful to the Prophet (s) would not be deceived. They would see through *Dajjal's* awesome deception. 2020 will sweep all the rest of mankind off their feet in awesome deception.

III-The Theory of Universal Flux:

It is a fact and a necessary constitution of Being that all its constituents are transitory, momentary and fleeting.

(Buddha)

This theory of universal flux (*anicca*) is also derivable from the theory of dependent origination. Nothing is real, hence nothing is permanent. Nothing is necessary. All is contingent, and hence all is transitory.

All component things are subject to decay. Work out your own salvation with diligence.

(Buddha)

Things are constantly coming into being and passing away. They exist only for moments, and for even less than moments.

This theory has its counterpart in the philosophical thinking of many nations. The Greeks, for example, had it in the famous Heraclitus who taught the concept of a universal flux to such an extent that, as he says: *We step and do not step into the same river, for fresh and every fresh waters are constantly pouring into it.*⁴¹

Iqbal, the great Muslim philosopher-poet, has expressed the same idea in his beautiful couplet:

*Perennial serenity (denoting changelessness) is impossible in the world of natural phenomena. (Indeed) permanence is found only in the fact of change itself*⁴²

The fact of change also finds expression in the Qur'an, but in a different perspective from its Buddhist counterpart. Both Buddhism and Islam affirm the action of change in the order of natural phenomena. Islam goes even further to characterize Allah Himself as dynamic to the extent that *He constantly reveals Himself in a new Glory and Splendour.*⁴³

⁴¹ Gomperz: Greek Thinkers, Vol. 1, p.66

⁴² *Sukoon mahal hai kudrat kay karkhanay main,
Thabat sirf tagayyur ko hai zamanay main.*

⁴³ Every day He (reveals Himself in a new manifestation of) His glory and splendour. (Qur'an: 55:29)

The important difference is the use which Buddhism and Islam make of the fact of change. The Buddhist application is negative and potentially destructive, the Islamic application is positive and constructive. Let us explain.

Buddhism uses the *universal flux* to turn away the individual from the *life of this world* and to strengthen his commitment to the *other-worldly life*. The application is therefore psychological in nature and negative in intent.

The Islamic application is also psychological when applied to the goods and pleasures which men cling to in this life, and when it affirms the more permanent nature of the life hereafter:

يَا قَوْمِ إِنَّمَا هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا مَتَاعٌ، وَإِنَّ الْآخِرَةَ هِيَ دَارُ الْقَرَارِ.

O my people, surely the life of the present is nothing but a temporary convenience: It is the hereafter that is the home of permanence, constancy and stability.

(Qur'an: 40:39)

The Islamic application is psychological in nature but positive in intent, for it turns man away from the life of this world when lived *as an end-in-itself* and converts the life of this world to *a-means-to-an-end*. Unlike Buddhism, Islam does not ask that the believer should turn away from this world so full of change. Islam asks that the believer should ponder and reflect over the fact of change in this world. Iqbal has grasped this idea when he says: *It is our reflective contact with the temporal flux of things which trains us for an intellectual vision of the non-temporal.*⁴⁴

But the Islamic application is more than psychological. It is

⁴⁴ Iqbal, Dr. M: Reconstruction of Religious Thoughts in Islam, p. 14

creatively suggestive within the framework of physical science:

يَقْلِبُ اللَّهُ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ، إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَعِبْرَةً لِّأُولِي الْأَبْصَارِ.

It is Allah who alternates the night and the day: Verily in this there is a rule (of guidance) for those who are observant (of the phenomena within them and around them).

(Qur'an: 24:44)

The Qur'an directs us to observe the constitution of the heavens and the earth and its basic characteristic of change. This is beautifully portrayed in the alternation of day and night, of light and darkness. Such observation cannot but lead the enquiring mind to the scientific quest of unravelling the secrets of the natural order, be it through physics or chemistry or biology, or medicine, etc. The Qur'an points to the fact that change in the natural order is not at random. It is meaningful, purposeful and displays a distinct pattern or design. This quest is such that when it is undertaken and the secrets of the heavens and the earth begin to reveal themselves, the heart of the believer bursts forth in the cry:

رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هَذَا بَاطِلًا.

Our Lord! Thou hast not created this in vain.

(Qur'an: 3:188)

This in turn leads to a specific attitude towards the universe we inhabit. It is reality to be reckoned with, and, in fact, it is in reckoning with reality (as in Islam), and not in detachment (as in Buddhism), that man grows to his true greatness. Iqbal has conveyed this idea in a very thought-provoking observation:

It is the lot of man to share in the deeper aspirations of the universe around him and to shape his own destiny as well as

*that of the universe, now by adjusting himself to its forces, now by putting the whole of his energy to mould its forces to his own ends and purposes If he does not take the initiative, if he does not evolve the inner richness of his being, if he ceases to feel the inward push of advancing life, then the spirit within him hardens into stone and he is reduced to the level of dead matter. But his life and the onward march of his spirit depend on the establishment of connections with the reality that confronts him.*⁴⁵

This is Islam's constructive use of the fact of change, - the flux. The Buddhist use was quite different. It is, we believe, difficult to find any Buddhist contribution in the field of physical science which has emerged in consequence of the impact of Buddhism on scientific thought and research. If we are wrong we would like to be corrected. On the other hand there is a glorious legacy of Muslim contribution to scientific thought over 1400 years which has emerged in direct consequence of the impact of the Qur'an.

Islam, with its dynamic approach to reality, succeeded in building a virile and dynamic culture. Indeed history will not end before authentic Islam challenges all its rivals in the world and emerges triumphantly as the dominant force in the world. Buddhism, with its escapist approach to reality, has constantly produced passive cultures. The dynamism of Islam will become increasingly evident as Muslims prepare themselves to challenge the political imperialism, the economic exploitation and oppression, and the moral decadence and godlessness of the dominant modern western civilization.

IV—The Not-Self (Anatta):

In my opinion, the most distinctive contribution of Buddhist thought to knowledge has been in the field of philosophical

⁴⁵ Iqbal, Dr. M.:Reconstruction of Religious Thoughts in Islam, pp.11,12

psychology. In their analysis of the self, the Buddhists found that man had no immortal abiding changeless substance in him called 'soul' or 'ego'. Man, they said, is just a composition of five *skandas*⁴⁶ with a name attached to this composition. These five *skandas* are:

the body,

feelings,

perceptions,

impulses and emotions, and

acts of consciousness.

Further analysis yielded nothing which could not be brought under the heading of one or the other of the five *skandas*. The Buddhists concluded, illogically therefrom, the Buddhist doctrine that there is no immortal abiding 'soul', - illogical because all that they could legitimately conclude was the unreality of the empirical self!

The theory of the 'not-self' has two applications in Buddhist philosophy: firstly, in the realm of morals; secondly, in the realm of psychology.

In projecting the idea of 'self' or 'ego' as being unreal, a figment of the imagination and a convenient appellation, Buddha was apparently making a laudable attempt at cutting at the roots of the moral evils which arise from excessive love of self. This constitutes a sympathetic understanding of Buddha's attack on the ego. The sins of the ego are the most widespread, the most serious and the most vicious. In fact, the very first sin committed in creation, according to the Qur'an, was a sin of the ego. *Iblis* (Satan)

⁴⁶ *Skanda*: an incongruous transitory element.

disobeyed the command of Allah to bow before Adam (s) because, as he argued:

أَنَا خَيْرٌ مِنْهُ خَلَقْتَنِي مِنْ نَارٍ وَخَلَقَهُ مِنْ طِينٍ

I am better than he. Thou hast created me from fire. And him Thou hast created from clay.

(Qur'an, 7:12)

We cannot, therefore, over-emphasize the magnitude of the sins of the ego. Buddha, without any metaphysics, had to stop at the destruction of the empirical self. Islam, with its metaphysics, solves the same problem in an effective and acceptable way. Islam does not ask that the empirical self be destroyed or annihilated (as a misreading of the Sufi doctrine of *fana* might seem to indicate). *Rather, Islam demands that the individual ego be sublimated in the service of the divine Ego (jihad fi sabil Allah).*⁴⁷ Within the sphere of morality this is achieved through active participation in the moral struggle resulting in the 'purification' (rather than 'destruction') of the self (*tazkiyah al-nafs*). This purification process begins with the taming of 'the carnal animal self' or 'the self prone-to-evil' (*al-nafs al-ammarah*). This is the intensely practical stage of the purification process.

Next comes the stage of psychological conditioning involving the quickening to life of the 'self-reproaching spirit', or 'the self, conscious of evil it has committed, and regretful of having done so' (*al-nafs al-lawwamah*).

Finally, we come to the stage of the 'beatified self' or the 'self, free-from-evil, and in a state of peace and contentment' (*al-nafs al-mutmainnah*). Here the sublimation of the finite self

⁴⁷ Strive and struggle in the way of Allah with all your possessions and with your complete selves. (Qur'an: 9:39)

and its submission to the Infinite Self is complete and perfect. This is the *Nirvana* of Islam!

The Critique of the Empirical Self

As mentioned earlier, this is Buddhism's unique contribution to philosophical thought, *i.e.*, its analytical investigation of the concept of 'I'. Nagasena, the monk, silenced Melinda, the King, when the King challenged the doctrine of *not-self*:⁴⁸

In exactly the same way, your Majesty, in respect of me, Nagasena is but a way of counting, term, appellation, convenient designation, mere name for the hair of my head, hair of my body . . . brain of the head, form, sensation, perception, the predispositions and consciousness. But in the absolute sense there is no ego to be found.

The King had flung a very persuasive challenge at the monk:

Bhante Nagasena, if there is no ego to be found, who is it, then, furnishes you priests with the priestly requisites, - robes, food, bedding and medicine, the reliance of the sick? Who is it makes use of the same? Who is it keeps the precepts? Who is it applies himself to meditation? Who is it realizes the paths, the fruits and nirvana? Who is it destroys life? Who is it takes what is not given to him? Who is it commits immorality? Who is it tells lies? Who is it drinks intoxicating liquor? Who is it commits the five crimes which constitute proximate karma?⁴⁹ In that case there is no merit; there is no demerit; there is no one that does, or causes to be done, meritorious or

⁴⁸ For an interesting dialogue on the subject see Radhakrishnan and Moore, *Op. cit.*, pp. 280-284

⁴⁹ *i.e.*, *karma* that bears fruits in this life.

demeritorious deeds; neither good nor evil deeds can have any results. Bhante Nagasena, neither is he a murderer who kills a priest, nor can you priests, Bhante Nagasena, have any teacher, preceptor or ordination.

Now all that Nagasena (and Buddhism) did was to show that the empirical self could not be advanced as the answer to the question. But that does not dispose of the question! The self, ego, or I, is *there* as an immediate intuitive experience for each and every man. For Descartes, in fact, the only thing which was free from doubt was the 'self-certitude of the thinking ego' (*ego sum, ego existo*).⁵⁰ Secondly, the moral struggle becomes meaningless, even impossible, if the moral agent is without a permanent individuality on the basis of which he can be held responsible for his evils and rewarded for his good deeds.

It is the demand of morality that there be a real, permanent self. It is indeed surprising to find this grave slip in Buddhism, taking into consideration the fact that Buddha was essentially an ethical thinker. No amount of analysing or pruning can remove the experience of the 'I' as a permanent entity having a real existence, in fact, an existence more real than anything else.

Islam it is, which, hearkening to the insistent universal experience of the ego, affirms the reality of the self or ego. Islam agrees with Buddhism that the empirical self is not real. But Islam goes on where Buddhism stopped, and in fact had to stop, to make the '*transcendental self*' the *real self*. *In so doing Islam raises man above and beyond everything in this spatio-temporal dimension. Islam recognises him as the 'crown of creation', 'the small divine' or, in the language of the Qur'an, the 'khalifatullah ala al-ard'. He is the representative of Allah*

⁵⁰ Meditations II, Descartes Philosophical Writings, Selected and Translated by N.K. Smith.

on earth who is to pursue the mission entrusted to him by Allah, the mission of struggle for realizing the supremacy of Truth, *al-haq*, over all its rivals.

Later Buddhism (*Mahayana*) was, as we shall see later, forced to take the step of recognizing the reality of a transcendental dimension of existence. But *Mahayana* took the step only half-way. The little individual ego was recognized as false or unreal, but in its place *Mahayana* posited the existence of a universal transcendental self (which is the self of all beings), thus depriving the *Mahayanist* of his personal identity. Islam, it is, which affirms the individual transcendental self and makes it fully personal, when it establishes the doctrine of personal immortality.

Chapter Six

THE PHILOSOPHICAL SCHOOLS OF BUDDHISM

Buddhist philosophical thought is centered around two major problems:

Is there any Reality?

Can it be known?

The first problem is metaphysical, or, to be more precise, ontological. And the second problem is epistemological. As a matter of fact these are really the basic problems of all philosophical thought through the ages.

In answer to these two questions, about thirty different philosophical schools arose in Buddhism. We shall briefly discuss here the better-known major schools only.

To the metaphysical question “Is there any reality, mental or non-mental?”, three different replies have been given:-

- i. The *madhyamika* hold that there is no reality - mental or non-mental; all is void (*sunya*).
- ii. The *yogacara* hold that only the mental is real; the material world is devoid of reality.
- iii. The *realists* hold that both the mental and the non-mental are real.

In respect of the epistemological question “Can reality be known?” the realists are divided into two groups:

iii-a *sautrantika*, or indirect realists, who hold that external objects are not perceived directly, but are known by inference.

iii-b *vaibhashika*, or direct realists, who hold that the external world is perceived directly.

The Madhyamika School of Nihilism or Relativism

There is a very important phrase in the Qur'an which Muslims repeat very often. It reads:

اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ.

Allah is He on Whom all depend, but Who is Himself independent; or: Allah is the only necessary being, all else is contingent; or: Allah alone exists, all else subsist.

(Qur'an:112:2)

By virtue of this verse, the Muslim thinkers concluded that the world is neither *Real*, because only Allah is *Real*, nor is it *Unreal*, because it subsists. The world, rather, is relatively *Real*. It partakes of *Reality*. It subsists as *real* by the Grace of the *Real*.

In much the same manner the *Madhyamika* school philosophized that the phenomenal world is neither *Real* nor *Unreal*. Neither is mind *real*, nor is matter *real*. They based their arguments on two main teachings of Buddha, i.e., the theory of dependent origination and the theory of the universal flux.

That which is *real* must be permanent, unchanging. That which is subject to change, to decay, - which comes into being and passes away, cannot be *real*. But all the world is in a

constant flux. The universal flux characterizes both the mental and non-mental. Therefore the world cannot be *real*.

Again, according to the theory of dependent origination, there is a universal law of causation operating in this world such that every effect is dependent on some cause which precedes it. Now that which is dependent for its existence on something other than itself, - that which is not self-existent and independent, cannot be *real*. Hence the external phenomena are not *real*.

At the same time the external world cannot be called *unreal* because an *unreal* thing like a bachelor-husband can never come into existence.⁵¹

The chief exponent of this *Madhyamika* philosophy, Nagarjuna, summed up the case very neatly in the pithy expression, all is void (*sunya*). Hence the school came to be known as *nihilism*. This school may also be called *relativism*, because of the relative nature of the existence of all things.

But Nagarjuna did not remain confined within the boundaries of original Buddhism. He went on to give a two-level doctrine of truth, very much like Kant's 'phenomena-noumena', and Bradley's 'appearance-reality'. Beyond the unreality of the phenomenal world there is a transcendental dimension of existence which cannot be described (by virtue of the fact that it transcends experience). It is this transcendental reality which is *real and abiding*.

This formed part of the philosophical foundations of the *Mahayana* sect of Buddhism when they ventured to interpret *nirvana*, not as state, or an ethical ideal, but as a metaphysical

⁵¹ This is the dialectical nature of Buddhist thought through which all judgments about reality are shown to be contradictory. See p. 19

entity in a transcendental dimension of existence. The *Mahayana* went on to formulate the doctrine which identified Buddha himself with this transcendental reality, thus opening the way for the worship of Buddha as God. This was something undreamt of in early Buddhism, and my Buddhist readers may wish to pause to reflect over this for quite a while.⁵²

The Yogacara School of Subjective Idealism

The *Yogacara* school, agreeing with Nagarjuna that all matter was unreal, differed with him concerning the *reality* of the mind. According to them if the mind was also *unreal* then there would be no means of affirming even the truth of the *Madhyamika* teachings! For them, mind alone is *real*.

Yogacara then went on to use acute philosophical arguments to disprove the real existence of external objects. Objects must be either atomic (partless) or composite (composed of parts). But if atomic, they will be too small to be seen, and if composite, they cannot be seen as a whole, - in which manner they are in fact seen. (Cf. Gestalt school of psychology).

Another difficulty which arises, if the reality of external objects is to be affirmed, is that the consciousness of the object cannot arise before the object has come into existence. Neither can it arise afterwards, because the object, being momentary, vanishes as soon as it arises. It also cannot arise simultaneously with consciousness, being the cause of consciousness, after it has ceased to exist. For, in that case, the object, being in the past, there cannot be any immediate knowledge of it. Therefore, if objects are regarded as possessing an existence independent of the mind, knowledge of present objects (which we must admit always to have) remains unexplained.

⁵² It will of considerable interest to my Buddhist readers to note that for some 500 years after his death, there were no statues of Buddha.

Mind, therefore, is all that exists. All else depends on the mind for its existence. This is called *subjective idealism* and it found expression in western philosophy in the views of Bishop Berkeley (*esse est percipi*).

There are a number of serious objections to the *Yogacara* philosophy. If an object depends for its existence solely on the mind, how is it that the mind cannot create, at will, any object at any time? How do we explain the fact that objects do not change, appear, or disappear at the will of the perceiver? To answer these objections, the *Yogacara* school gave a far-fetched theory of the mind. Mind they say, is not a single, unchanging entity. It is a storehouse of impressions (presumably of past experience). Out of this storehouse the impressions arise, now from here, now from there, to form a veritable stream of consciousness. The intriguing question is, how did this storing take place at the beginning; and secondly, how is it that every single store-house is unique and different from every other store-house, and yet, if a mango is shown to a class of children they will all perceive it as a mango? And if it a Pakistani mango (the best in the world) they would all want a bite of it? (My readers in South East Asia would want to replace the mango with a *sultan durian*).

The *Yogacara* is more concerned with developing the moral side of this mind-theory. If mind is something becoming, something flexible and changing, then mind can be trained and developed on the right lines to ward off the arising of undesirable mental states and develop the ideal state of *nirvana*.

But this is opening the doors to the control of the mental stream. If it is possible to control this stream and direct it to productive channels conducive to the attainment of *nirvana*, then the original objection has to be met. How is it that the mind cannot create, at will, any object at any time (best of all, a *sultan durian* in the month of July)?

From the Qur'anic point of view the *Yogacara* philosophy is false and dangerous. Both mind and matter possess degrees of *reality*. True, mind is more real than matter, more real and fundamental than body. Mind is a part of 'personality', which was bestowed to man as the famous *amanah* (trust).⁵³ And, it is man, the fully personal being, to whom the heavens and the earth are subjected.⁵⁴ Hence mind possesses a more real existence than matter. But matter also possesses a degree of real existence, for Allah created the heavens and the earth with Truth (*al-haq*). *Yogacara* destroys this balance, gives mind the status of being the only reality, and makes of the external world a figment of our imagination, a dream, '*maya*', possessing no reality at all.

As a philosophical theory this can float around harmlessly in the philosophy classroom. But when this philosophical theory finds expression in life, in religion, it must, without fail, lead to the establishment of the institution of *monasticism*, the severance of worldly ties and the adoption of that peculiar sex philosophy which leads to celibacy. This, as we intend to show later, brings in its wake such perversions, sufferings, complications, and misery that we consider it the duty of sociologists, psychologists, philosophers, theologians and others, apart from the world Muslim community, to strike out as forcefully as possible against the anti-world philosophy and the institutions of *monasticism* and *celibacy* to which it gives rise. The Roman Catholic church has probably had to face enough lawsuits filed against it because of grave sexual misbehavior on the part of celibate priests that it would now be prepared to see the light of Truth.

⁵³ Verily we proposed to the heavens, to the earth and to the mountains to receive the trust (of personality), but they refused the burden and they feared to receive it. Man alone undertook to bear it. (Qur'an: 33:72)

⁵⁴ Do you not see that Allah has subjected to your (use) all things in the heavens and on earth. (Qur'an: 31: 20)

The Sautrantika School of Realism

The *Sautrantika* believe in the *reality*, not only of the mind, but also of external objects. They point out that without the supposition of some external objects, it is not possible to explain even the illusionary appearance of external objects.

Their argument for recognizing the *reality* of external objects is directed primarily to the refutation of the arguments of the idealists.

If one never perceived anywhere, any external object, he cannot say, as the idealists do, that through illusion consciousness appears like an external object. The phrase 'like an external object' is as meaningless as 'like the son of a barren woman', because an external object is recognized by the idealists to be wholly unreal and never perceived.

Again, the idealists argue from the simultaneousness of 'consciousness' and 'object' to their identity. But this argument is defective. The object and the mind are clearly independent of each other, for if they were identical, then when I perceive a horse (or a *rambutan*), I should say 'I am the horse' (or *rambutan*).

Finally, if there were no external objects, the distinction between the consciousness of a 'pot' and the consciousness of a 'watch' could not be explained, because 'consciousness', 'watch' and 'pot' would all be identical. Hence we must admit the existence of external objects.

Sautrantika as Indirect Realism or Representationism:

In respect of the question: can reality be known? the Realists are divided into two schools. *Sautrantika* made an analysis of perception and concluded that it is not just a simple matter of mind and object. There are, in fact, four factors involved in an act of

perception. Chatterjee and Datta have listed them thus:

*There must be the object to impart its form to consciousness, there must be the conscious mind (or the state of the mind at the just previous moment) to cause the consciousness of the form, there must be the sense to determine the kind of consciousness, that is, whether the consciousness of that object would be visual, tactual or of any other kind. Lastly, there must be some favourable auxiliary condition, such as light, convenient position, perceptible magnitude, etc. All these combined together to bring about the perception of the object.*⁵⁵

On the basis of this analysis of the act of perception, *Sautrantika* concluded that it was impossible to perceive the object directly. The object reaches the mind indirectly, first generating in the mind the form (of the object). It is this copy or representation of the object in its own consciousness which the mind immediately knows. But from this it can infer the object without which the copy would not arise.

In short, *Sautrantika* argues that perceptions are reflections or copies of external objects which can only be known to exist by inference. This is *indirect realism*.

The Vaibhashika School of Direct Realism

The *Vaibhashika*, like the *Sautrantika*, affirmed the reality of both mind and matter. This metaphysical agreement, however, did not extend to epistemology. Taking strong objection to the indirect realism of *Sautrantika*, *Vaibhashika* affirmed the possibility of perceiving the object directly. This is direct realism. According to them inference from impressions can only be possible through a prior perception of the object. Only he who has seen fire and smoke

⁵⁵ Chatterjee and Datta: Op. cit. p. 174

conjoined can infer fire from smoke. But, according to *Sautrantika*, we have never perceived any objects directly. If this is so, inference is not possible. He, who has never seen a mango, can never infer a mango from an impression in the mind, of a mango!

Chapter Seven

THE RELIGIOUS SCHOOLS OF BUDDHISM

It is very clear from a study of the original teachings of Gautama Buddha (which we have attempted to analyse in this book) that he encouraged the other-worldly life, or the life of detachment from the affairs of this world. In freeing the individual from the Hindu caste system and the religious monopoly of Brahmins, he went to the other extreme to make every man 'an island unto himself'. For example, in his last words, which he spoke to his chief disciple, Ananda, he said:

Be lamps unto yourselves, be ye refuge to yourselves, betake your selves to no external refuge. Hold fast to the truth (the dhamma or the law). Look not for refuge to anyone except yourselves.

*Decay is inherent in all component things. Work out your own salvation with diligence.*⁵⁶

The most natural interpretation of the Buddhaic dispensation was that it was a religion of *self-help*.

Each man is the master of his own destiny - for better or for worse. There are no intermediaries between 'man' and 'deliverance' (like the Brahman priestly class of Hinduism, the Rabbis of Judaism, and the Padres of Christendom). True enough, this gave rise to a religious response which is free, dynamic, spontaneous, creative

⁵⁶ Maha-Parinibbana Sutta, vi. 1.11. Quoted from Chatterjee and Datta: Op.cit. p. 177

and original. But, on the other hand, it also amounted to 'each man unto himself', and as is well known, in a dispensation of 'each man unto himself', the devil easily takes the hindmost!

This was the original, accepted interpretation of the Buddha's teachings. The Buddhist accepted the '*four noble truths*' and walked along the '*noble eight-fold path*' until *nirvana* was reached. *Nirvana* was a state of contemplative quietude out of which the saint would never emerge to render any form of assistance to his fellowmen struggling to achieve salvation. For the Buddhist who was struggling to achieve *nirvana*, the doors of this world were closed.

But, if the doors of this dimension (the spatio-temporal) are closed, perhaps there is another dimension of existence which transcends this, and whose doors are open.

Here, again, the struggling Buddhist is let down. He faces closed doors. Buddha consistently refused to affirm or deny the existence of a transcendental dimension of existence with transcendental verities like *God* and *soul* and an *abiding reality*.

The *Hinayana* sect of Buddhism, in sticking to original teachings of Buddha, refused to open the doors of either of the two worlds.

The *Mahayana* sect of Buddhism, flying in the face of the original teachings of Buddha, opened both the doors. In the discussion that follows we shall point out the doctrinal grounds and trace out the historical and psychological reasons for this about-face on the part of the *Mahayana*.

For a religious way of life to be true (i.e., the pragmatic test of truth), it must be universally applicable. Theoretically, at least, it must be possible for all of mankind to adopt it. If all of mankind cannot adopt it, as is the case with *Hinayana* Buddhism, it can

either be false, or partially true, but cannot be true in the complete sense of the word.

Now, the life of Buddha bears testimony to the fact that he conceived of his teachings as universally applicable. He himself, for forty-five years, traveled hundreds (maybe thousands) of miles from city to city reaching out the message of Buddhism as far as he could. Also, he sent his emissaries as missionaries of Buddhism to different peoples.

Buddhism may claim today to be a world-religion. But Buddhism, as Buddha taught it, could never have succeeded in becoming a world-religion. The *Mahayana* school of Buddhism therefore changed the Buddhist doctrines with the 'noble' objective of making them universally applicable. *Buddhism flourished, but at the expense of Buddha!*

This World

Firstly, then, we should consider the opening of the doors of this world, which were locked with the key: work out your own salvation!

From the time of Buddha himself, the Buddhists have been divided into two groups - the monks and the laity. After the first two or three hundred years of existence of Buddhism, a number of royal personages became Buddhists. Among them was the famous Asoka, who spared no pains in reaching out the message of Buddhism to mankind. The ranks of the laity grew considerably. But it was not a pleasant proposition, either for them or for the likes of Asoka, that the *sangha* (monastic order) was the only road to salvation. The pressure which the lay-folk exerted was two-pronged. The first, of course, was the legitimate human demand that they too should be able to strive for salvation (indeed, who does not want to save his soul?). The second was more forceful. The monks were dependent for their overall sustenance on the

charity of the lay-folk. And the easiest way to a man's heart is through his stomach (*which is the basic reason why Dajjal has been using riba to reduce all of non-White humanity to a state of destitution. He has also, in turn, utterly corrupted western civilization and its clients around the world by injecting them with that blind greed which seduces them into becoming the bloodsuckers of mankind*). Thus when it came to a matter of bread and butter, the monks naturally found it expedient to lend a sympathetic ear to the legitimate demands of the lay-folk and to admit into Buddhism a 'participation' by the monk in assisting the lay-folk in their moral and spiritual struggles. (This innovation was at the expense of Buddha's last command: *work out your own salvation!*). As if this was not enough, they went on to hold out the possibility of salvation even for the layman.

The *Mahayana* sect, which opened the doors to 'this world' through their innovations, were quick to defend themselves against the indignant orthodox *Hinanyanists*. And what telling arguments did they use!

One of the pre-requisites for admission into *nirvana* is that the saint should have conquered and *obliterated* his personal self or 'I'. This is a difficult task! Now the monk who devotes himself exclusively to the task of *working out his own salvation*, is being terribly selfish, for he is showing no concern for the salvation of mankind. Even when he has attained *nirvana*, has he not attained it for *himself alone*? Thus the self has not been conquered. It is still very much there.

And not only is he very selfish, but he is also very cruel! Imagine a family stranded in the middle of a forest with wild animals threatening to attack at any time. What shall we think of the brother who sneaks off and tries to escape without giving a thought for the safety and survival of the other members of the family?

The *Mahayana* sect argued that mankind should be assisted in its struggle for salvation. They pointed for support to Buddha's

long life of missionary endeavour. They claimed this to be a living commentary of the truth of their stand. He who seeks to achieve *nirvana*, they argued, should first help his brothers to *nirvana*, in the same manner in which the man in the forest should first help his family to safety before he makes good his own escape. Such a man or *would-be-Buddha*, they called a *bodhisattva* in contra-distinction to the *arhat*, the selfish saint who seeks to achieve *nirvana* for himself alone, - who takes the 'short cut to salvation' (*Hinayana*) rather than the 'long and difficult road' (*Mahayana*).

This policy-change contributed in no small measure to the survival and spread of Buddhism. The religion, as preached by Buddha, was an ideal which could only be practiced by the select few (the monks) and which demanded renunciation of the world and the worldly life. But that would have resulted in the end of mankind, for it called for the universal acceptance of the institution of *monasticism* and, with it, the institution of *celibacy*. The *Mahayana*, by turning away from the 'solo flight of the lone to the alone', adjusted the perspective of Buddhism and made it a religion for the common man as well (even though he be comfortably or uncomfortably married, living a settled or unsettled life at home and performing all his functions and duties as a father and a husband).

The Other World

As we mentioned earlier, the *Hinayana* sect stuck to the original teachings of Gautama Buddha and consistently refused to affirm a transcendental dimension of existence with its 'unseen verities'. *But this unique experiment of religion without a transcendental dimension of existence failed.* Today the overwhelming majority of the Buddhists believe, in some form or the other, in a transcendental dimension of existence and in 'unseen verities'. In fact, popular Buddhism today is saturated with unseen verities with charms and magic and disembodied

spirits.⁵⁷ The cause and history of this failure form extremely valuable material for the daring psychologist of religion who would like to prove the existence of a transcendental dimension of existence from a study of the religious consciousness.

The *Mahayana* sect opened the doors of the 'other world', the transcendental dimension of existence, and in so doing they restored belief in an 'abiding reality', 'God' and 'soul' to their religious way of life. Again they made the orthodox *Hinayanis* furious. But again they could bring to their defense some plausible arguments.

An Abiding Reality

As we saw in our discussions on the theories of 'dependent origination' and 'universal flux', if the world possessed any *reality* at all, it was an ephemeral reality and not an abiding *reality*. It was contingent - and not necessary, dependent - and not independent, fleeting - and not permanent. The second of the two fundamental statements of Buddhism is *sarvam kashnikam*, i.e., 'all is fleeting'.⁵⁸

The *Madhyamika* school of Buddhist philosophy, consistent with the teachings of Buddha, denied the reality of the world, both mental and non-mental. But this did not amount to a denial of all *reality*. Rather, it denied only the *reality* of the apparent phenomenal world perceived by us. *Behind this phenomenal world there is a reality which is not describable by any character, mental or non-mental, that we perceive.* The *Mahayanis* accepted this metaphysics and defended their apparent innovation on the ground that Buddha's silence on the ten metaphysical questions concerning things beyond our experience did not imply their non-existence. It rather signified their indescribability. They argued that the life and teachings of Buddha provided hints to the truth of this interpretation.

⁵⁷ Cf. *Tantra*, or magical Buddhism, in Conze, Op. cit., p. 174

⁵⁸ The other statement is *sarvam dukham*, i.e., 'all is suffering'.

God

In the original teachings of Buddha, and in the *Hinayana Buddhism*, there is no concept of God, nor of any deity. This does not connote atheism (denial of the existence of God). It is rather a refusal to affirm the existence of any deity. Apparently a disciple once asked Buddha whether God existed. He refused to reply to the question. When pressed for an answer, he responded with a question: *if you are suffering from a stomach ache, would you be concerned with the relief of the pain or with studying the prescription of the physician? It is not my business or yours to find out whether there is a God, - our business is to remove the suffering of the world.*

But man is by nature a religious being and his religious constitution is such that he craves for a personal deity who can be the worthiest object of worship. The worship of a Supreme Being seems to be programmed in human nature itself. This argument is located in the psychology of religion. The history of religion all through the ages delivers incontestable evidence of such.

My teacher of the philosophy of history, Dr. Burhan Ahman Faruqi, reached the same conclusion using a different approach and with another argument. This is what he says:

Man finds himself confronted in his course with insurmountable obstacles. On the one side stands he with his innate yearning after harmony with reality, after moral perfection and happiness, after knowledge and after beauty. On the other stands the universe, unamenable to harmony with his moral and spiritual yearnings, and unwilling to accede to the demands of his soul. He finds himself helpless, - forlorn. There must be a Being who has the power, as well as the will, to help him, if he is to be rescued. Hence it is that religious consciousness

*affirms the existence of such a Being.*⁵⁹

Buddhism faced this problem by providing *dhamma*, or 'the impersonal law', in place of God. But that could not satisfy the cravings of mankind. The religion of *self-help* had to be converted into the religion of *promise and hope*! The *Hinayana* could not hold out any promise of external help to the forlorn multitudes. To such miserable creatures the *Mahayana* held out the hope that the Buddha's watchful and compassionate eyes are on all miserable beings. In other words, the *Mahayana* made a god out of Buddha! The *Mahayana* performed this impressive ontological acrobatics by identifying Buddha with the *reality* it had accepted. In its philosophical or speculative form (*i.e.*, *madhyamika*) this *reality* was not away from, but within, the phenomenon. In other words, it was an 'immanent' reality. But when applied to religion this 'immanence' had to be converted to 'transcendence'. Thereafter Buddha could be identified with it for it to become a qualitative, transcendent, personal, describable or knowable reality! This is the triumph of personal deity in religion.

The learned writer of the article, '*Mahayana*', in the Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, strikes a different note. According to him, it was not a natural evolution of God within Buddhism but rather the effect of Hinduism on Buddhism:

It is almost certain that this transformation of the Buddha may be explained by the natural evolution of the Buddhist dogma on Hindu soil. The resemblance between the Buddha reigning peacefully in paradise and sending images of himself down to this world, on the one hand, and Krsna (Krishna) gladdening beings in his own world (Goloka) and appearing in a human form, on the other, is striking and contains a valuable lesson."⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Faruqi, Dr. B.A. The Mujaddid's Conception of Tauhid, p. 32. This book was his thesis for the Ph.D. in philosophy at Aligarh Muslim University. It is an excellent work.

⁶⁰ Vol. 8, p. 334

Dr. Conze attempts to explain the same point by directing attention to the eclectic nature of Buddhism:

*The Buddhists would find no objection whatsoever in the cult of many gods because the idea of a jealous God is quite alien to them; and also because they are imbued with the conviction that everyone's intellectual insight is very limited, so that it is very difficult for us to know when we are right but practically impossible to be sure that someone else is wrong. Like the Catholics, the Buddhists believe that a Faith can be kept alive only if it can be adapted to the mental habits of the average person. In consequence we find that in the earlier Scriptures, the deities of Brahmanism are taken for granted and that, later on, the Buddhists adopted the local gods of any district to which they came."*⁶¹

To conclude this discussion, the religion of 'no God' was transformed into a religion of 'many Gods' - big and small, strong and weak, male and female. The 'man-God' Buddha appears on earth in human form (i.e., incarnates) from time to time. Christianity presents no less amazing a spectacle. There too, God comes down to earth to walk and talk like other men. But he is the son-God⁶²

The Self

The *Mahayana* did a complete job of opening the doors of the transcendental dimension of existence. Buddha and early

⁶¹ Conze, Op. cit., p. 42

⁶² Some may argue that Christianity should be warmly applauded for the support it has lent, in spite of its emphasis on monasticism, to the institution of the 'family'. Even God has a 'family'! The 'family-God' of Christianity is Jesus, the 'only begotten son' of God, Mary is the mother of God and, to complete the family, there is God, the father! But, seriously now, it is an unpardonable act of blasphemy that one should attribute to Allah, the One God, the belief that He has a spouse, or a son, or daughters.

Buddhism had done a thorough job of demonstrating the unreality of the empirical self. And because the doors of the transcendental dimension of existence were closed, Buddha, it is said, concluded that there was no self. But this was a highly unpalatable dish for most Buddhists. It evoked a feeling of dread to be told that there is no 'self'. Even more, it is quite absurd to labour for salvation when there is no one to be saved.

The *Mahayana*, like Islam, pointed out that there does exist a real self. But this is a *transcendental self*, not the empirical self or the small individual ego.

There are two differences, however, between the *Mahayana* and Islam, in respect of their concept of the self. Firstly, Islam does not conceive of the empirical self as wholly unreal. It does possess a measure of reality, but it is not the real self. Secondly, whereas Islam affirms the existence of exclusively individual transcendental selves, the transcendental self of the *Mahayana* is a big single self (*Mahatman*) which is the self of all beings. The *Mahayana* is therefore faced with the problem of personal identity, a problem which Islam solved admirably. Apparently Chatterjee and Datta overlooked this serious problem when commenting that *the devout Mahayanist thus finds his self restored in a more elevating and magnified form*.⁶³

Concluding Remarks

Some writers have attempted to explain that this struggle between the *Hinayana* and the *Mahayana* was a struggle between two equally noble motives, namely, greater purity and greater utility.⁶⁴

For example, an eminent Japanese writer comments:

⁶³ Chatterjee and Datta, Op. cit., p. 183

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 183

*It (Mahayanism) is the Buddhism which, inspired by a progressive spirit, broadened its original scope, so far as it did not contradict the inner significance of the teachings of the Buddha.*⁶⁵

But as we have pointed out, the *Mahayana* created what amounts to a veritable revolution in Buddhism. It opened the doors which were closed by Buddha himself. Our view is that this phenomenon can best be described as *Buddhism's struggle for survival*. Buddhism survived and flourished, but at the expense of Buddha. Our view is that the innovations of the *Mahayana* sect opened the doors for the complete corruption of Buddhism. The religion taught by Buddha (like the religion taught by Jesus) is dying or almost dead. Most modern scholars, as we noted earlier, agree that Buddhism must have been quite different from what it has subsequently been interpreted to be. In fact, Buddha actually prophesied this when declared that his teachings will ultimately decline and disappear from the earth.⁶⁶

This disappearance is almost complete today, for many Buddhists are sunk in the most loathsome superstitions and childish rituals. Original Buddhism has experienced total change.

H.G. Wells has described this in a very pithy language:

*Gautama's disciples unhappily have cared more for the preservation of his tree (the Bo-tree which still exists) than of his thought, which from the first they misconceived and distorted.*⁶⁷

Writing on the corruptions of Buddhism, Mr. Wells makes these interesting observations:

⁶⁵ Suzuki, D.T.: Outlines of Mahayana Buddhism, p. 10

⁶⁶ Vide: *Anagata-vamsa*, see also p. 2.

⁶⁷ Wells, H.G. An Outline of History, p. 392

Tibet today is a Buddhistic country, yet Gautama, could he return to earth, might go from end to end of Tibet seeking his own teaching in vain. He would find the most ancient type of human ruler, a god-king, enthroned, the Dalai Lama,⁶⁸ the 'living Buddha'. At Lhasa he would find a huge temple filled with priests, abbots, and lamas - he whose only buildings were huts and who made no priests - and above a high altar he would behold a huge golden idol, which he would learn was called 'Gautama Buddha'! He would hear services intoned before this divinity, and certain precepts, which would be dimly familiar to him, murmured as responses. Bells, incense, prostrations, would play their part in these amazing proceedings. At one point in the service a bell would be rung and mirror lifted up, while the whole congregation, in an access of reverence, bowed lower

About this Buddhist countryside he would discover a number of curious little mechanisms, little wind-wheels and water-wheels spinning, on which brief prayers were inscribed. Everytime these things spin, he would learn, it counts as a prayer 'To whom?', he would ask. Moreover, there would be a number of flagstuffs in the land carrying beautiful silk flags - silk flags which bore the perplexing inscription, 'On Mani Padme hum', 'the jewel is in the lotus'. Whenever the flag flaps, he would learn, it was a prayer also, very beneficial to the gentlemen who paid for the flag and to the land generally. Gangs of workmen, employed by pious persons, would be going about the country cutting this precious formula on cliff and stone. And this, he would realize at last, was what the world had made of his religion.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ At the time when Wells wrote his book, the Dalai Lama had not as yet fled to New Dehli

⁶⁹ Wells, Op. cit., pp. 408-9

My Buddhist readers will be amazed to learn that the very same disease, which befell Buddhism, is now attacking Islam. Around the world today hordes of secularly-educated Muslim pseudo-scholars are hard at work attempting to reinterpret Islam in such a way as to make it compatible with today's essentially godless, increasingly decadent, and awesomely deceptive modern world. Contemporary Islamic modernism is, perhaps, the most dangerous enemy Islam has ever had to face in all its history.

Nowhere in the strange modern world of Islam has the advance of Islamic modernism been more ominous than in Malaysia, - until, by divine providence, a great evil axe fell. We hope that the eyes of misguided Islamic modernists may now be opened *Insha Allah*.

Chapter Eight

INFLUENCE OF BUDDHISM ON CHRISTIANITY

Preliminary Observation

There are two Buddhisms, the original gospel of Buddha (whatever it may have been) and what has generally passed as popular Buddhism through the ages.

Similarly there are two Christianities. The first is the religious message, which was taught by Jesus himself. The second is the Christianity which has survived to this day after innumerable changes and deviations were made from the original. Prophet Muhammad (*s*) has prophesied that Jesus (*s*) will one day return to the world. When he comes back he will, among other things, 'break the cross'. This will result in the end of that Christianity which is based on the Cross.⁷⁰

When we discuss the influence of Buddhism on Christianity, we will, in fact, be discussing the influence of Buddhism on 'popular' Christianity. The original teachings of Christianity (which are still preserved to some extent among the Unitarians), like the teachings of Islam⁷¹, were promulgated by the same Divine Being, under the cover of divine sanction, through divinely-appointed messengers who were granted divine guidance!

⁷⁰ Christian readers may wish to listen to a lecture on the subject: 'An Islamic View of the Return of Jesus' which I delivered in Singapore in August 1998. The audiocassette may be obtained from the publisher of this book: The Muslim Converts' Association of Singapore.

⁷¹ In its proper connotation Islam stands for authentic religion. Hence the religion taught by Jesus was Islam.

The Influence

Before the birth of Christ, Buddhist teachings, in some form or the other, had reached the shores of the Mediterranean. In fact, from there Buddhism went on to influence Greek thought. Students of early Greek philosophy are all familiar with the Pythagorean 'transmigration of souls', and the Platonic concepts of 'reminiscence' and 'the dialectic' - i.e., the real world of ideas and the unreal world of particulars. If, therefore, the research scholar discovers numerous similarities, or even identities, between Buddhist and Christian teachings, institutions, rituals, and myths, he must be forced to admit that, in all likelihood, one religion must have influenced the other. This influence is less likely to be a Christian influence on Buddhism because Buddhism arose five centuries before Christianity. There might have been some two-way traffic, but the conclusion must be that if one religion influenced the other it is more likely to be a Buddhist influence on Christianity.

Many Christian scholars have, in fact, admitted that the Christian gospels have, to some extent, been influenced by Buddhist doctrines.

We shall try briefly to trace out the similarities between Buddhism and Christianity. For a more exhaustive study on the subject we must refer the reader to chapter three of the book, *Islam and Christianity in the Modern World*, where the author, Dr. Ansari, discusses the *Pagan Foundations of Christianity with an Argument from Buddhism*.

What seemed to appeal most to the early Christians was the miraculous side of Buddhism. Dr. Conze gives three examples:

- i. *Saint Paul walking on water trod in the footsteps of many Buddhist saints.*

- ii. *Buddhists are very fond of the twin-miracle: 'Fire streamed forth from the upper part of the body of the Tathagata and from his lower part proceeds a torrent of water'. In John 7:38 we find the curious statement: 'He that believes in me as the Scriptures have said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water'.*
- iii. *The Tathagata could, if he so wished, remain for an aeon,⁷² just as Christ 'abideth for an aeon'.⁷³*

Some Christian scholars go far beyond Dr. Conze to make claims such as the following:

All the tales, miracles, similies and proverbs of the Christian Gospel have their counter-part in the Buddhistic Gospel.⁷⁴

Others, like T.W. Doane, claim that, with the exception of the death of Jesus on the cross and the doctrine of vicarious atonement, the lives and doctrines of Buddha and Jesus correspond and coincide with each other entirely.⁷⁵ T.W. Doane goes on to make investigations which yield more than fifty points of identity or close similarity between Christian and Buddhist beliefs.⁷⁶

We shall depend, for the most part, on the classroom notes of my distinguished teacher of comparative religion, Prof. Yusuf Saleem Chishti, to bring out some twenty-four such striking resemblances: -

⁷² i.e., an immense period of time.

⁷³ Conze, Op. cit., p.104

⁷⁴ Melamed, S.M.: Spinoza and Buddha - Visions of a Dead God.

⁷⁵ Doane, T.W.: Bible Myths and their Parallels in Other Religions.

⁷⁶ Ibid., pp. 287-97. These have been reproduced in Dr. Ansari's book: Islam and Christianity in the Modern World, pp, 78-91.

Both Jesus and Buddha were miraculously conceived;

Both were born wondrously;

The fathers of both Jesus and Buddha were given news by angels before the birth of their sons;

Both were born of virgin mothers;

On the day of Buddha's birth, a Brahman predicted his future greatness; Likewise we read in the Gospels that some wise men from the East visited Mary and predicted the future greatness of Jesus. (Luke:- 2:8-40);

The Brahman came to Buddha's mother through the air. Simon came by the spirit into the temple;

Both steadily grew in wisdom and stature;

Before becoming the Buddha, Siddhartha observed a fast for 49 days. Before becoming the Christ, Jesus fasted for 40 days;

Buddha was tempted by Satan (Mara). So was Jesus.

Mara said to Buddha: If you believe in me I will turn the Himalayas into gold. Buddha replied: He who has seen pain, how can he bow to lust? On hearing this, the evil one vanished. Jesus was also tempted in the wilderness and the same thing happened with him;

After overcoming the temptation, Siddhartha received 'enlightenment' to become the Buddha. Similarly Jesus became the Christ.

After the enlightenment, Buddha performed many miracles.

Jesus also performed many miracles after becoming Christ;

The Buddha was transfigured and his body shone like a star. Jesus was also transfigured and his body shone;

Buddha sent 12 disciples to carry his message to all classes of mankind. Jesus also had 12 disciples;

Buddha was known as the incomparable physician (healing the blind, the sick, the lepers, etc., by mere touch). Jesus was also, in the same sense, a great physician;

Buddha washed a sick monk with his own hands. Jesus also washed the feet of his disciples;

Buddha converted a robber named Angolimara. Jesus also converted a thief on the cross;

Buddha converted a harlot named Ambapali and dined with her. Jesus converted a harlot who anointed his feet;

Both Buddha and Jesus were accused by their enemies of being hypocrites - 'living in abundance';

Both bade their followers to lay up for themselves a treasure which neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, nor thieves break through to steal;

Both taught in parables and their parables are very similar if not, in some cases, identical. For example the Gospel, attributed to Jesus, borrowed from Buddha the parables of the prodigal son and the sower;

Both condemned ceremonial religion;

Both made triumphant entries into their native cities;

And both advised their disciples not to strike in return.

Apart from these influences of Buddhism on Christian beliefs, Buddhism left its indelible imprint on the institutions and rituals of the Christian religion. Neither in the life of Jesus, nor in the Gospels, is there any foundation for the Christian institution of *monasticism*. From whence, then, did it come? There are many authorities who hold the view that *monasticism* in Christianity is derived almost wholly from Buddhism. H.C. Lea, for example, remarks: *In this (monasticism), as in some other forms of asceticism, we may look to Buddhism for the model on which the Church fashioned her institutions.*⁷⁷ Lea also points to the influences of Buddhism in the legend of the life of Christ.⁷⁸ Then he goes further to show the Buddhist origin of many Christian rituals:

Many of the observances of Latin Christianity would seem explicable by derivation from Buddhism, such as monasticism, the tonsure, the use of beads, confession, penance, and absolution, the sign of the cross, relic worship, and miracles wrought by relics, the purchase of salvation by gifts to the Church, pilgrimages to sacred places, etc., etc. Even the nimbus, which in sacred art surrounds the head of holy personages, is to be found in the sculptures of the Buddhist Topes, and the Sangreal, or Holy Cup of the Last Supper, which was the object of lifelong quest by the Christian knight, is like the Patra or begging dish of Buddha, which was the subject of many curious legends. It is no wonder that when the good Jesuit missionaries of the sixteenth century found among the heathens of Asia so much of what they were familiar with at home, they could not decide whether it was the remains of a pre-existing Catholicism, or whether Satan, to damn irrevocably the

⁷⁷ Lea, H. C. : History of Sacerdotal Celibacy, p.71

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 16

*souls of men, had parodied and travestied the sacred mysterious and ceremonies, and introduced them in those distant regions. We may therefore perhaps, ascribe to Buddhist beliefs, at least a portion of the influence which led the Church into the extravagances of asceticism.*⁷⁹

A Christian missionary has in fact left his impressions for us of how perplexing he found this possession of a common tradition of worship:

*The cross the mitre and dalmatica, the cope, which the Grand Lamas wear on their journeys, or when they are performing some ceremony out of the temple; the service with double choirs, the psalmody, the exorcisms; the censer, suspended from five chains, which you can open or close at pleasure; the benedictions given by the Lamas by extending the right hand over the heads of the faithful; the chaplet, ecclesiastical celibacy, spiritual retirement, the worship of the saints, the fasts, the processions, the litanies, the holy water, all these are analogies between the Buddhists and ourselves.*⁸⁰

We have provided just a sample of the kind of evidence which can be presented in a proper research work to demonstrate the plausibility of the claim that Buddhism exerted a profound influence on Christianity. Both being missionary religions competing for the souls of men, this appears to constitute a very great embarrassment for Christianity. On the other hand it may, perhaps, help to explain the ease with which a significant number of Buddhists in South East Asia and the Far East are entering into Christianity in search of upward mobility. Perhaps they also feel at home in Christianity!

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 17

⁸⁰ Hu, E.R.: Travels. Quoted by H.G. Wells in his Outline of World History, p. 399

Chapter Nine

BUDDHISM AND THE ENCOUNTER WITH WORLD RELIGIONS

Hinduism

We noted earlier that Buddhism arose as a revolt against Hinduism. Buddha proclaimed the Vedas to be quite useless. He struck a heavy blow against the religious monopoly of the Brahman, and the caste system, by opening the doors of salvation to even the lowest of the low. He counteracted the over-metaphysical and over-ritualistic features of Hinduism by making of Buddhism a purely ethical system, and by replacing rituals and sacrifices with the struggle for the moral transformation of the personality.

But Hinduism, in-turn, scored victories over the new rebellious religion by influencing it to adopt the Hindu theories of *karma*, *transmigration of souls*, *ahimsa* (non-violence), etc. In fact, the Hindu influence on Buddhism has been so powerful that some writers regard Buddhism as virtually an off-shoot of Hinduism.⁸¹

In its encounter with Hinduism, Buddhism both lost and gained. It lost on two grounds. Firstly, Hinduism succeeded in giving Buddhism a strongly Hindu coloring. Secondly, Hinduism eventually succeeded in ousting Buddhism from India. Some Orientalists and Hindu writers accuse Islam of persecuting the Buddhists and contributing to their being driven out of India.

⁸¹ Ansari, Dr. F.R.: Which Religion?, p. 9

Nothing could be farther from the truth because, by the time Islam became the dominant power in India, the expulsion of Buddhism had already been completed.⁸² Indeed, it was not Islam but the resurgent, militant intolerant Hinduism which committed this crime. H.G. Wells refers to this event as follows:

*For some time Buddhism flourished in India. But Brahminism, with its many gods and its endless variety of cults, always flourished by its side, and the organization of the Brahmins grew more powerful, until at last they were able to turn upon this caste-denying cult and oust it from India altogether...there were persecutions and reactions, but by the eleventh century, except for Orissa, Buddhist teachings was extinct in India.*⁸³

Another famous historian, Arnold Toynbee, does not mention Islam at all when he says: *Buddhism was expelled from India by a part-Buddhaic Hindu.*⁸⁴ Thus did Buddhism lose to Hinduism.

The Muslims now living in India face a similar threat from militant Hinduism. Our view is that today's dominant modern western civilization will self-destruct. History will not end, however, before Islamic civilization is forced to respond to, and successfully dispose of, both Jewish and Hindu oppression.

The encounter of Buddhism and Hinduism witnessed significant successes for Buddhism. In the mutual influence of Hinduism and Buddhism, Hinduism was improved while Buddhism was debased. Humphreys, for example, has this to say:

⁸² Islam became dominant in India at about 1000 A.C. The tide turned against Buddhism in India in the seventh century. Cf. Christmas Humphreys: *Op. cit.* p. 57

⁸³ Wells, *Op. cit.*, p.409

⁸⁴ Toynbee, A.: *A Historian's Approach to Religion*, p.90

*The popular forms of Hinduism, as the compound of Indian religions based on the Vedas and Unpanishads may be called, had been enormously improved by Buddhist moral philosophy, while Buddhism had in many respects been debased by its lazy tolerance of the forms of Hinduism*⁸⁵

Buddhism made all her converts from Hinduism without Hinduism being able to reclaim them. When Hinduism succeeded in ousting Buddhism from India, it was not the manly way, i.e., on the battle-front of ideas, but through persecution. This also constitutes a victory for Buddhism, for it implies that if the Buddhists can regain a foothold in India, their missionaries are certain to achieve significant successes.

Christianity

In the preceding chapter we attempted to show the great influence which Buddhism exerted over Christianity. In the encounter of these two world-religions, Buddhism has undoubtedly emerged the victor to the extent that the devout *Mahayani* Buddhist who goes to a Catholic country will hardly have cause to be homesick.

There is little evidence to show that Christianity exerted a similar influence over Buddhist beliefs, and, until the emergence of essentially godless Euro-Christianity, less evidence of Christian missionary successes in the Buddhist countries. Christianity had a golden opportunity for a trial of strength with Buddhism when western imperialism thrust itself into the eastern lands. The Buddhists did not offer any serious resistance to that thrust, and individual Buddhists have, indeed, been converting to Christianity. But Christianity failed to win over a single Buddhist country, and Buddhist conversions to Christianity have largely been motivated by considerations of

⁸⁵ Humphreys, Op. cit. p. 58

upward mobility. In fact it will always remain the most difficult task for the innocent Christian missionary to sell Christianity to the world of Buddhism. It would be like 'sending coals to Newcastle'!⁸⁶

Islam

There is very little memory left in the world today of a historic encounter which took place between Islam and Buddhism in history. Both Muslim and Buddhist readers would benefit from an effort to step back into history for a moment and examine that encounter which resulted in a resounding victory for Islam.

Firstly: Islam influenced Buddhist doctrine without incorporating into itself, in return, anything from Buddhism. I refer here to the Buddhist concept of *Adi-Buddha*:

*Sometime around 800 A.C., according to Dr. Conze, a doctrine was propounded in various places and in varying forms, which tried to derive the five Tathagatas as emanations from one, original, first or primeval Buddha, who is some times called the Adi Buddha and who is the eternal living principle of the entire Universe.*⁸⁷

This concept of *Adi-Buddha*, which constitutes the first and only monotheistic trend in Buddhism, arose in the north-west of India in the wake of the encounter of Islam and Buddhism.⁸⁸

Secondly: Islam succeeded, where no other religion has succeeded, in winning to its fold millions of Buddhists in Central

⁸⁶ Buddhist conversions to Christianity in Singapore and Malaysia etc., do not appear to represent the triumph of one belief-system over another.

⁸⁷ Conze, Op. cit. p.190

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 43

Asia, South-West Asia, South-East Asia and China. In some cases an entire nation of Buddhists was won over to Islam.

Now this is a remarkable fact! The three great missionary religions of the world are Islam, Christianity and Buddhism. Christianity and Buddhism preceded Islam by five hundred and one thousand years respectively. They therefore had a clear head-start in the field. They drew their converts from secondary and tribal religions and cults, some of which have now disappeared. Islam, on the other hand, drew over three-fourths of her converts from areas under the influence of the great religions of the world, and these included the proselytizing religions, Christianity and Buddhism.⁸⁹

Another remarkable thing is that Islam is the only Semitic religion which has been able to achieve any measure of success in its confrontation with the ancient religions of the East, i.e., Hinduism, Confucianism, Taoism and Shintoism. In fact, the only other religion that succeeded in this field was Buddhism; but then Buddhism, in turn, could achieve no success against the Semitic faiths.⁹⁰

It is a truly remarkable thing that since the Prophet Muhammad (s) preached Islam fourteen hundred years ago, to this day, no religion in the world, missionary or non-missionary, world-religion, national religion, or tribal religion, has succeeded in winning over Muslims to its fold. We mean thereby 'real conversion', not 'curry conversion'. It does no credit to Christian missions in poverty-stricken Indonesia to boast of converts won through ration cards or through years of brain-washing in educational institutions. Nor can Russia, China or India be gleeful about Muslims who are falling as victims of brute force and barbarism, or because of their systemic forced alienation from their religious institutions and their springs of religious inspiration.

⁸⁹ Vide: Masdoosi, A.: *Living Religions of the World*, p. 105

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.105

In its confrontation with Islam, Buddhism was the loser. To prove our point we shall draw from one very significant historical event and, in doing so, we hope to silence those critics who still persist in their accusation that Islam was spread through force, or through natural historical causes (Toynbee), and not through the inherent truth, superiority, and dynamism of the faith, and the impact of the personality of its founder, Prophet Muhammad (s).

In the beginning of the thirteenth century the centers of civilization, Christian, Buddhist and Muslim, east of Egypt, fell victims to one of the most amazing and heart-rending destructions in history. The Mongols, who had been consolidated into a war-machine by Jenghez Khan, swept down from obscurity to conquer China in the East, and then, in 1218, moving westwards, to plunder, kill, destroy and lay waste the cities of the Muslim Khwarizmian empire. Kashgar and Khokand were razed to the ground and their inhabitants passed under the sword. Bokhara was reduced to ashes. Finally Samarkand itself, the capital, was destroyed, and of its million inhabitants only 50,000 remained to tell the fate of the ruined city.

Thereafter nothing could stop the Mongols as their armies laid waste the centers of civilization. One by one, Balkh, Urganj, Nessa, Nishapur, Herat, Rai, Dinwar and Hamadan fell to the merciless sword of Jenghez Khan. Millions were slaughtered with a barbarity too heart-rending to narrate. But in 1221 A.C., after the Mongols had destroyed half the Islamic world, they were checked by the Iraqi troops of the Caliph Mustansir. They then turned in another direction and, by 1241 A.C., they had swept across Asia to Russia, ravaged Poland and occupied Hungary.

But the destruction of Islam was not yet complete. It remained for Halaku Khan to resume in 1258 A.C. where Jenghez Khan had left off in 1221 A.C. Halaku invaded the capital city of the Muslim Abbaside Empire, Baghdad, and in six weeks of rape, slaughter, burning and unimaginable horrors, reduced Baghdad to

ruins. According to Ibn Khaldun, a population of over two million was reduced in six weeks to less than 400,000.⁹¹

Out of this wave of Mongol destruction it was the Muslims who suffered the most. Thomas Arnold gives a vivid description of the Muslim plight. He says:

There is no event in the history of Islam that, for terror or desolation, can be compared to the Mongol conquest.

When the Mongol army marched out of Herat, a miserable remnant of forty persons crept out of their hiding places and gazed horror-stricken on the ruins of their beautiful city, - all that were left out of a population of over 100,000. In Bokhara, so famed for its men of piety and learning, the Mongols stabled their horses in the sacred precincts of the mosques and tore up the Qur'an to serve as litter; those of the inhabitants who were not butchered were carried away into captivity and their city reduced to ashes. Such, too, was the fate of Samarkand, Balkh, and many another city of Islamic civilization and the dwelling places of holy men and seats of sound learning, - such, too, the fate of Baghdad, that for centuries had been the capital of the Abbasid dynasty.⁹²

Ibn al-Athir, the famous Arab historian, has also written on this subject. His introduction to the subject would suffice to give the reader an idea of the destruction wrought by the Mongols. Here are his introductory comments:

I shall have to describe events so terrible, and calamities so stupendous, that neither day nor night have ever brought

⁹¹ A detailed account of this ghastly story is to be found in Ameer Ali: A Short History of the Saracens, pp.391-401

⁹² Arnold, Sir Thomas: The Preaching of Islam, p.218

*forth the like; they fell on all nations, but on the Muslims more than all; and were one to say that since God created Adam the world have not seen the like, he would but tell the truth, for history has nothing to relate that at all approaches it.*⁹³

I have brought the proceeding historical quotes to the attention of the reader because they are most important for understanding and appreciating the significance of what follows.

The Mongols were without a stable religion that could stand its own against the major world religions with which their conquests had brought them into intimate contact. The primitive religion of the Mongols was *shamanism*. The civilized races with which the conquest of the Mongols brought them into contact, comprised large numbers of Buddhists, Christians and Muslims, *and the adherents of these three great missionary faiths entered into rivalry with one another for the conversion of their conquerors.*⁹⁴ We turn to Thomas Arnold for an initial description of that encounter:

*Buddhist priests held controversies with the Shamans in the presence of Jenghez Khan; and at the courts of Mangu Khan and Qubily the Buddhist and Christian priests and the Muslim Imans alike enjoyed the patronage of the Mongol prince*⁹⁵ *The spectacle, says Arnold, of Buddhism, Christianity and Islam emulously striving to win the allegiance of the fierce conquerors that had set their feet on the necks of adherents of these great missionary religions is one that is without parallel in the history of the world.*⁹⁶

Now let us take stock of the situation. Islamic civilization had been destroyed. The Muslims had been conquered, their centers

⁹³ Ibn al - Athir, Vol.xii, pp. 233-4. Quoted by Arnold, Ibid. p.219

⁹⁴ Ibid.,p.220

⁹⁵ Arnold, Op. cit. p. 200 . Arnold quotes from William of Rubruck.

⁹⁶ Ibid. p. 200

of learning reduced to ashes, their *ulama* (those learned in the religious disciplines) almost wiped out. In such conditions an Islamic missionary effort was launched to convert the Mongols. Surely there could be no place for force there! To make matters more difficult for Islam there were two powerful competitors in the field. The task seemed almost impossible. Arnold agrees:

For Islam to enter into competition with such powerful rivals, as Buddhism and Christianity were at the outset of the period of Mongol rule, must have appeared a well-nigh hopeless undertaking. For Muslims had suffered more from the storm of the Mongols invasion than the others. Those cities that had hitherto been the rallying points of spiritual organization and learning for Is'lam in Asia, had been for the most part laid in ashes: the theologians and pious doctors of the faith either slain or carried away into captivity. Among the Mongol rulers, - usually so tolerant towards all religions, - there were some who exhibited varying degrees of hatred towards the Muslim faith. Chingiz Kahn ordered all those who killed animals in the Muhammadan (i.e., Muslim) fashion to be put to death, and this ordinance was revived by Qubilay who, by offering rewards to informers, set on foot a sharp persecution that lasted for seven years.⁹⁷

It was in such conditions that the most crucial and historic confrontation between Buddhism, Islam and Christianity took place. **Islam won a decisive victory. The Mongols were converted to Islam.** Arnold describes it as follows:

In spite of all difficulties, says Arnold, the Mongols and the savage tribes that followed in their wake were at length brought to submit to the faith of those Muslim peoples

⁹⁷ Ibid., p.225

whom they had crushed beneath their feet.⁹⁸ In a similar strain he comments: But Islam was to rise again from the ashes of its former grandeur and, through its preachers, win over these savage conquerors to the acceptance of the faith.⁹⁹

Christianity, which had entertained great hopes of winning this great missionary battle, failed completely. For an account of this failure I must refer the reader to Chapter 32, Section 5 of H.G. Well's *Outline of History*, where he discusses the subject: *Why the Mongols were not Christianized*. For a detailed account of the success of Islam in converting the Mongols, the reader may refer to Arnold's *Preaching of Islam* (Chapter 8) where he discusses: *The spread of Islam among the Mongols and Tartars*.

This defeat of Buddhism and Christianity was particularly ignominious. It was the greatest and most historic missionary battle in history involving, as it did, the three great missionary religions of the world. Islam won the battle in as convincing a manner as was possible. Among the Mongol kings and ruling princes there were many who had been converted or brought up as Christian or Buddhists. Even these were converted to Islam! Arnold narrates the following:

In the region of Ogotay (1229-1241), we read of a certain Buddhist governor of Persia, named Kurguz, who in his later years abjured Buddhism and became a Musalman (i.e., Muslim).¹⁰⁰

In the reign of Timur Khan (1323-1328), Ananda, a grandson of Qubilai and viceroy of Kan-Su, was a zealous Musulman (i.e., Muslim) and had converted a great number of persons in Tangut and won over a large number

⁹⁸ Arnold, Op. cit. p. 226-7

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 219

¹⁰⁰ Arnold, Op. cit. p. 227. Arnold quotes from C. D. Ohsson, Vol.ii, p. 121

*of the troops under his command to the same faith. He was summoned to court and efforts were made to induce him to conform to Buddhism, and on his refusing to abandon his faith he was cast into prison. But he was shortly after set at liberty for fear of an insurrection among the inhabitants of Tangut, who were much attached to him*¹⁰¹

*Takudar (the son of Halaku Khan) ...was the first of the Ilkhans (the dynasty founded by Halaku) who embraced Islam. He had been brought up as a Christian, for he was baptised when young and called by the name of Nicholas*¹⁰² *(Halaku Khan's favorite wife was a Christian and favorably disposed the mind of her husband towards her co-religionists. His son, Abaqa Khan, though not a Christian himself married the daughter of the Emperor of Constantinople. Takudar succeeded Abaqa as the ruling prince).*

The successors of Takudar were all heathens until, in 1295, Ghazan, the seventh and greatest of the Ilkhans, became Musulman (i.e., Muslim) and made Islam the ruling religion of Persia...

Ghazan himself, before his conversion, had been brought up as a Buddhist and had erected several Buddhist temples in Khurasan, and took great pleasure in the company of the priests of this faith . . .

*He appears to have been naturally of a religious turn in mind, for he studied the creeds of the different religions of his time, and used to hold discussions with the learned doctors of each faith.*¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 227. Arnold quotes from Rashid al-Din, pp. 600-2

¹⁰² Ibid, p.229

¹⁰³ Ibid. pp. 232-3

His brother (i.e. Ghazan's brother), Uljaytu, who succeeded him in 1304, under the name of Muhammad Khudabandah, had been brought up as a Christian in the faith of his mother and had been baptized under the name of Nicholas, but after his mother's death, while he was still a young man, he became a convert to Islam through the persuasions of his wife (who was a Muslim)?. From this time forward Islam became the paramount faith in the Kingdom of the Ilkhans.¹⁰⁴

We hope the research of Thomas Arnold, from whom we have quoted so extensively, has proved the point to the satisfaction of the reader, that the encounter between Buddhism and Islam resulted in a resounding victory for Islam. It was not possible, nor necessary, to discuss the entire range of this encounter. We narrowed down our discussion to this single confrontation, - the struggle to win over the Mongols, and we have shown that it was Islam which won this greatest of all missionary battles.

In our opinion the only thing which prevents Islam today from making a more positive impact on the Buddhist world is the Muslims themselves. They have lost their proselytizing spirit and their thirst for the acquisition of knowledge. The spirit of Islam, it seems, has fled, and all that now remains of Islam in the world is a mere formalistic, ritualistic shell. When our readers are confronted by government appointed Islamic institutions, 'think tanks' etc., led by scholars correctly dressed in starched shirts, jackets and ties, they would do well to remember that ominous prophecy of the Prophet (s) which has now been fulfilled. Ali said that the Prophet (s) said:

It will not be long before a time comes when nothing will remain of Islam but the name, and nothing will remain of the Qur'an but the words; the mosques will be grand

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 234

structures but would be devoid of true guidance, and the religious scholars of Islam will be the worse people beneath the sky; from them will issue that which deceives and corrupts, and they will be the centres of that deception and corruption.

(Sunan of Baihaqi)

It is our fervent prayer that this book of ours may contribute something towards rekindling a flame of missionary spirit and a love of knowledge in the hearts of our Muslim readers.

Before we end this chapter there is one very important point which we would like Muslims to note. This battle of the giants, the three missionary religions of the world, *was won for Islam by the Sufis. Of special importance, says Arnold, among the proselytising agencies at work, was the influence of the pir and his spiritual disciplines the pir, or spiritual guide, and religious orders, - such as the Naqshbandi, which in the fourteenth century entered on a new period of its development, - breathed new life into the Muslim community and inspired it with fresh fervour.*¹⁰⁵

We live today in a strange age in which the spiritual heart of the religious way of life is being subjected to massive attacks from modernized secularized religious forces. The Protestant movement in Euro-Christianity, which attacked the spiritual heart of that religion, has its counterpart in every other religion in the world today. Islam is no exception. The *Wahhabis*, i.e., Islamic Protestants, were the first to launch their venomous attack on the *Sufis* of Islam. It has now become fashionable for so many others to join in that attack on the *Sufis*. While we hasten to admit that Sufism, like every thing else in this strange age, is being corrupted, that does not invalidate authentic *Sufism*. Indeed, it is *Sufism* which, through the ages, has guarded the spiritual heart of Islam. Shall we attack Islam itself because of the many false versions of Islam now

¹⁰⁵ Arnold, Op. cit. p. 239

parading in the world (particularly in Chicago)? One of greatest scholars of Islam in this age, Dr. Muhammad Iqbal, was tremendously influenced by the Sufi master, *Maulana* Jalaluddeen Rumi. *Maulana* Dr. Ansari, to whom this book is dedicated, was a *Sufi Shaikh*. And this writer himself belongs to the *Qaderiyyah* spiritual order in *Sufism*.

The *tableeghi jamaat* is a prominent example of an Islamic movement which has abandoned the revolutionary struggle of challenging the forces of falsehood (*batil*) and evil (*munkar*) in the world today, and of struggling for the reemergence of Islam as the dominant force in the world. Authentic *Sufism* has not done so. This writer has not done so. And yet foolish, ignorant, misguided Islamic scholarship in this strange age makes a profession of attacking even authentic *Sufism*.

Chapter Ten

COMPARISON OF ISLAM AND BUDDHISM

In any future contest between Islam and Buddhism, Islam is bound to emerge victorious. This must be so because of the clear superiority of Islam over Buddhism as a religion which is capable of responding to the awesome challenges of the modern age, - political, economic, moral, spiritual etc.

We propose, in this chapter, to embark on a comparative evaluation of Islam and Buddhism with a view to presenting the facts on the basis of which the reader may be able to undertake a critical evaluation.

Scriptural Comparison

In Chapter One, we have already discussed the Buddhist scriptures. We now resume that discussion in the context of a comparison with the scripture of Islam. We have already seen that the earliest Buddhist scriptures are in Pali and were written some 400 years after the death of Buddha. *They cannot, therefore, give us any reliable historical information about the life and teachings of Buddha.* Christmas Humphreys, a Buddhist convert who says of himself that he studied Buddhism for thirty years and “*of Buddhism in the world today I know more than most*”, has this to say about the Buddhist Scriptures:

The Buddha himself wrote nothing, and none of his teaching was written down for at least four hundred years after his death. We therefore do not know what the Buddha taught,

*any more than we know what Jesus taught; and today at least four schools, with sub-divisions in each, proclaim their own view as to what is Buddhism.*¹⁰⁶

The scriptures of Buddhism are numerous and mutually conflicting. Buddhism employed, in the main, two languages for recording her scriptures. In the Pali language are recorded the scriptures of the *Hinayana* sect, and in the Sanskrit language those of the *Mahayana* sect. Both these sets of scriptures oppose each other. This makes a *Hinayana-Mahayana* reconciliation next to impossible. Both these languages, Pali and Sanskrit, are now virtually dead, or survive as literary curiosities. Sanskrit despite its re-emergence, is still, in its new usage, archaic. The ordinary Buddhist cannot, therefore, go directly to his scriptures. Like the Christian, he has to depend on translations.

The scripture of Islam is confined to one single text, the Qur'an. It was recorded in the life-time of the founder of the religious community, Muhammad (s), the Prophet of Allah. And it has survived to this day, over a period of 1400 years, in its original form without the addition or omission of even a letter. As hostile a critic as Sir William Muir is forced to admit: *Except the Qur'an there is no other book under the sun which, for the last twelve centuries, has remained with so pure a text.*¹⁰⁷ The scripture of Islam is in one language, Arabic, which is today a living language spoken by hundreds of millions of people all over the world. Thus the ordinary and even the uneducated Muslim has direct access to the scripture of Islam. *What is more astonishing is that even after 1400 years the Arabic of the Qur'an still retains its position as the best classical Arabic and the model for the entire field of modern literary work in that language.*¹⁰⁸ The Bible, on the other hand,

¹⁰⁶ Humphreys, Op. cit. p. 11

¹⁰⁷ Muir, Sir, W. : Life of Muhammad.

¹⁰⁸ George Sale, the hostile critic of Islam, says: The Koran is universally allowed to be written with the utmost elegance and purity of language. It is confessedly the standard of the Arabic tongue. 'The Koran: The Preliminary Discourse', p. 47.

which has been retranslated into English from its Greek translation (there is no original Bible) has had to be continuously revised in search for accuracy. The language, also, is constantly being modernised.

Secondly, the entire Muslim world accepts the Qur'an as its only scripture. Muslims may belong to this or that sect, but they all believe in the same scripture. Their differences are differences of interpretation of some verses of the Qur'an. The possibility always, therefore, exists, for their differences to be resolved. Indeed, the biggest sectarian rift in Islam, the *Sunni-Shia rift*, is certain to be healed with the advent of *Imam al-Mahdi*.

As regards the life of Muhammad (s), unlike Buddha, he stands out in the full glare of history. He is, in fact, the only founder of a religious community about whose life we have records that can pass the test of historical criticism. Arnold Toynbee, another hostile critic of Islam, has this to say:¹⁰⁹

*The sources for the study of Islamic history from Muhammad's lifetime onwards, are copious, and many of them are of first-rate value from the historian's professional point of view. Muhammad's career, unlike Jesus's, can be followed point by point and, in some of its chapters, almost day by day - in the full light of history*¹¹⁰

John Davenport states:

*It may be truly affirmed that of all known legislators and conquerors not one can be named the history of whose life has been written with greater authenticity and fuller detail than that of Muhammad.*¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Toynbee, A.,: A study of History, Vol., 12, p. 463

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Davenport, John: An Apology for Muhammad and the Koran, p. 1

From the pen of a distinguished Christian clergyman comes the very significant statement:

We know less of Zoroaster and Confucius than we do of Solon and Socrates: less of Moses and Buddha than we do of Ambrose and Augustine. We know indeed some fragments of a fragment of Christ's life; but who can lift the veil of the thirty years that prepared the way for the three What do we know of his mother, of his home life, of his early friends, and of his relation to them, of the gradual dawning, or, it may be, the sudden revelation of his divine mission. How many questions about him occur to each of us that must always remain questions?

But in Mohammedanism everything is different: here instead of the shadowy and mysterious we have history. We know as much of Muhammad as we do even of Luther and Milton. The mythical, the legendary, the super-natural is almost wanting in the original Arab authorities, or at all events can easily be distinguished from what is historical. Nobody here is the dupe of himself or of others; there is the full light of day upon all that light can ever reach at all."¹¹²

The question must be raised: is the life and teachings of the founder of Islam and Buddhism of any significance to the religions themselves, - to Muslims and Buddhists? Both religions answer in the affirmative that they are of paramount importance. But today's scientific mind insists on a merciless examination of all historical documents which claim to be religious scriptures. The funeral pyre which modern Biblical criticism has made of the Christian scriptures has led numerous Christians to abandon the real Christian life, lived by faith, for a mere formal and social attachment with Christianity. 'After all it seems as though we can never know the real life and teachings of Christ!'

¹¹² Smith, Rev. Bosworth: Mohammad and Mohammedism, pp. 16-18

Now in the scriptural confrontation between Buddhism and Islam, it is the Islamic scripture alone which can satisfy all the demands of the modern scientific mind. In fact, it is the only religious scripture in the world today which can escape the funeral pyre! *It is, and will always be, possible for us to have certain knowledge of Islam and Muhammad. It is, and will always be, impossible for us ever to be certain about what is Buddhism and who was Buddha.*

Dimensional Comparison

This book has depicted the essential teaching of Gautama Buddha as being exclusively ethical in character. Original Buddhism was confined to an ethical system. But even as an ethical system Buddhism is problematical, as our critique of the fundamental statements of Buddhism, the theories of *Karma*, transmigration of souls, not-self, etc., have shown.

Buddhism preaches a philosophy of detachment from the world in order that the mental state of contemplative quietude may be reached. Detachment from the world and otherworldliness belong to the Buddhist philosophy of life. But detachment as a moral ideal is dangerous. Toynbee draws out an appalling moral conclusion:

*. . . as a moral achievement it is over-whelming; but it has a disconcerting moral corollary; for perfect detachment casts out pity, and, therefore, also, love, as inexorably as it purges away all the evil passions.*¹¹³

Again, Buddhism's moral code is openly hostile to women. Buddha was never tired of describing the defects and vices of women and warning the monks to guard against them.¹¹⁴ The

¹¹³ Toynbee, Op. cit. Vol. 6, p. 144

¹¹⁴ Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics: art: Ethics and Morality, Vol. 5, p. 453

Orthodox decried sexual intercourse as the 'bovine' or 'bestial' habit, and they cultivated a certain contempt for women? The monk was warned to be perpetually on his guard, and a short dialogue admirably sums up the attitude of the early Buddhists:

Ananda: How should we behave to women?

Lord: Not to see them!

Ananda: And if we have to see them?

Lord: Not to speak to them!

Ananda: And if we have to speak to them?

Lord: Keep your thoughts tightly controlled!¹¹⁵

For more than 1,000 years, Buddhist monks remained celibate. After that one section of the Buddhists lifted the ban and permitted marriage. But even then woman was not absolved of her curse. Women were not free individuals. It appears from the following incident that she was considered as a chattel by some of the highest Buddhist religious personalities. Padma Sambhava, the Lotus-born, established Buddhism in Tibet about 770 A.C. He was considered to be a *second Buddha*. *He accepted from the Tibetan King the gift of one of his five wives.*¹¹⁶ Apparently 'the second Buddha' believed in women as chattel, who could be gifted by a husband to another man! Similar is the case of Marpa, the translator, *one of the greatest teachers of Tibet*. He married when 42 years old, and he also had eight other female disciples, who were his spiritual consorts.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ Conze, op. cit., p. 58

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 60

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 60

Islam has a very comprehensive ethical system. It does much more than minister to the moral needs of mankind. It, in fact, provides guidance for every aspect of human life - be it individual or social, spiritual or mundane, legal, or political, or economic, etc. Islam alone, among all the religious systems of the world, can present an economic teaching on the basis of its scripture, a teaching fundamentally different from the existing economic philosophies of the world,¹¹⁸ a teaching which promises to be *socially progressive and politically democratic, in which laissez-faire and socialism will attain a happy synthesis, in which capital will be controlled and yet man will be free.*¹¹⁹

Similarly Islam, through its scripture, the Qur'an, provides significant guidance in politics, law, the different branches of science like physics, chemistry, biology, geology, astronomy, astro-physics, etc. The Qur'an urges the exploration of space and the conquest of the heavens. In the field of philosophy the Qur'an not only gives an ethics, but, also, a metaphysics (something which Buddhism woefully lacks), a logic, aesthetics, epistemology, psychology, etc. The Qur'an has made real contributions to the philosophy of science, philosophy of history, philosophy of religion, psychology of mental hygiene and character-building and social philosophy.

The Qur'an gives detailed guidance in respect of man's social life. For example, it deals at length with the institutions of marriage and divorce, inheritance, voluntary and compulsory charity. It not only emphasizes the brotherhood of man, but also takes effective measures to bring about, through the institution of congregational prayer, the psychological framework which breeds the feeling of unity within a group and which grows until (in *Hajj*, or the pilgrimage to Makkah) it encompasses mankind at large.

¹¹⁸ Vide: Ahmad, Shaikh Mahmud: Economics of Islam.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, p. viii

The Qur'an goes even further to apply itself to the task of eradicating social evils. The scripture of Islam is the only religious scripture in the world which lays down a systematic, effective and workable framework for the eradication of that dimension of the institution of slavery which witnesses the immoral exploitation of human beings and the unjustified denial of freedom. It was not the Bible but the British Parliament which abolished slavery in the Christian British Empire in 1833, - and this was accomplished in the face of ecclesiastical opposition. In fact, the Christian Church supported the slave-trade to the extent that, as Dr. Eric Williams informs us *the bells of the Bristol Churches peeled merrily on the news of the rejection by Parliament of Wilberforce's bill for the abolition of the slave-trade.*¹²⁰

Upto to this day, the Qur'an is the only scripture, or moral system in the world (religious and secular), which has applied itself intelligently to the task of eradicating the evils of sexual immorality, and given a code of sexual morality that can effectively solve the sex problems of even the modern age. We say 'intelligently' because Islam, unlike Buddhism and Christianity, conceives of sex as natural, normal, necessary, pure and even sublime.

Again, on the question of sex, the Qur'an is the only religious scripture which not only makes woman a free individual but also gives her the right to own property and, even more, raise her to such a high status that, on the authority of Muhammad (s) himself: *Paradise lies at the feet of thy mother*, she becomes the object of the highest respect and veneration. The Buddhist scriptures, like the Bible, are full of negative comments concerning women. The Hindu wife, likewise, is

¹²⁰ Williams, Dr. Eric: *Capitalism and Slavery*, p. 42. This book contains a vivid, accurate and fully documented account of the slave trade of 18th and 19th century Christian Britain.

expected to mount the pyre of her dead husband and prove her fidelity and love to the extent of being cremated alive while he, lucky chap, is cremated dead.

Some more social evils which the Qur'an eradicates are the curse of alcohol and gambling, the use of narcotics and other deadly or harmful stimulants, the follies of extravagance and the vice of miserliness. The hand of the thief is to be cut off. The lazy good-for-nothing who will not work to earn his own bread, but prefers to live as a parasite on society, finds that there is absolutely no scope for such an occupation.

The conclusion is that dimension-wise Islam is far more comprehensive than Buddhism, for while Buddhism ministers to the moral needs of mankind, Islam provides guidance in every sphere of human life. And even within the closed field of ethics, the ethics of Islam, as we have tried to show in our discussion above and in previous chapters, is demonstrably superior to the Buddhist ethics.¹²¹

Archetypal Comparison

The archetype of Buddhism, Gautama Buddha, is decidedly inferior in respect of the richness of his life, the success of his mission and the stature of his moral personality, to the archetype of Islam, the Holy Prophet Muhammad (s). Gautama Buddha, from the time he attained enlightenment at the age of thirty-five until he died forty-five years later, devoted his entire life to only one activity, viz., ministering to the moral needs of mankind. In this connection he travelled far and wide, from city to city, covering thousands of miles on missionary errand.

¹²¹ The readers who would like to examine the entire ethical code of Islam may refer to Dr. F.R. Ansari's masterpiece: *The Qur'anic Foundations of Structure of Islamic Society*. World Federation of Islamic Missions. Karachi. 1973. A very short work on the subject is B.A. Dar's: *Qur'anic Ethics*.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, from the time he proclaimed prophethood at the age of forty, until he died twenty-three years¹²² later, led a life of such richness that it found expression as a head of state, a military commander, a family man, a lawgiver and judge, a social reformer, a political and diplomatic prince, an economist, etc., apart from his basic function of 'bringing the best morals to perfection.'¹²³ For the entire 23 years of his ministry he remained in the cities of Makkah and Madina except for a short trip to nearby Taif and divers military expeditions.

In connection with the success of their respective missions, Buddha labored for 45 years but did not live to see the rise and spread of Buddhism, - the impact of Buddhism on the world scene. In fact, he made so small an impact on his age that no historical reference to him is to be found except in the Pali scriptures of the Hinayana sect. Similar is the case with Christianity. In sharp contrast with that, Muhammad's impact on his age was dramatic, revolutionary, and historic. According to A.L. Kroeber; *Islam had no infancy and no real growth, but sprang up, Minerva-like, full-blown with the life of one man.*¹²⁴ And as for the impact of Muhammad on his time, the historian Christopher Dawson comments that history *allows the whole world-situation to be suddenly transformed by the action of a single individual like Muhammad . . .*¹²⁵

In fact, Arnold Toynbee, also, puts his stamp of approval of this aspect of our archetypal comparison when he says:

¹²² Buddha spent a time twice as long as Muhammad on his mission and did not achieve half as much.

¹²³ "I was raised in order that the best of morals may be perfected". Thus spoke Prophet Muhammad (s).

¹²⁴ The Nature of Culture, p. 388

¹²⁵ The Dynamics of World History, ed. By J.J. Mallory, p. 27

*Islam's epiphany was dramatic by comparison with Christianity's and Buddhism's. Jesus's life and death passed unnoticed at the time, except among the obscure and tiny band of his Galilaean Jewish disciples. Our information about his ministry comes exclusively from the scriptures of the Christian Church . . . Siddhartha Gautama's ministry, likewise, is known only from the Pali scripts of the Hinayana . . . Yet Buddhism did not make a political impact on the world on a grand scale till about 200 years, and Christianity not till about 300 years, after the founder's day, when their respective political fortunes were made by their conversions of Asoka and Constantine. On the other hand, Islam made a comparable impact during the founder's own life time, and its political fortunes were made by the founder himself*¹²⁶

Gautama Buddha's mission in life has turned out to be less than successful; for, as we have shown in our discussion on the 'religious schools of Buddhism,' the original teachings of Buddha have been turned upside down. Buddha closed the doors of both the worlds. Buddhists have opened the doors of both the worlds. In fact, if Buddha were to return today he might not be able to even recognize the religion which he founded.

The religion which Muhammad has taught is very much the same today as it was during his time. In fact, some Muslims have taken their repugnance to innovation to such an extreme limit that, as Dr. Ansari laments, *dynamic orthodoxy* has been replaced by conservatism. If Muhammad (s) were to return today he would find Muslims reading the same Qur'an, worshipping the same God (Allah), praying the same way, fasting the same way, giving the same compulsory charity, performing the pilgrimage in the same way as he did!

¹²⁶ A Study of History, Vol. 12, p. 461

In order that the reader may be able to judge for himself the successes of Buddha and Muhammad in their respective missions we shall discuss just one point here. Gautama Buddha remained perfectly silent about the existence of God. He never affirmed the existence of God. He certainly never claimed to be God or to be an object of worship. Today ninety-nine percent of Buddhists believe in and worship one god, many gods, and what is even worse, Gautama Buddha himself as god. The idol-worship which the Buddha revolted against has returned to Buddhism with such a vengeance that, wherever there are Buddhists today, there are idols (even of Buddha himself, some fifty feet high, some in pure gold, *etc.*) which are objects of worship.

The fundamental statement of Islam, or the 'declaration dynamite' of Muhammad (*s*), on the basis of which he raised the structure of the religious community in Islam, is *La ilaha illa Allah, Muhammadur Rasool Allah* - 'There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his servant and messenger.' Today, throughout the length and breadth of the earth among the 1,000 million and odd Muslims of the world, no one can be found who claims to be a Muslim and who has wavered even the slightest from this fundamental statement. If any Muslim, in fact, should believe in any other God than Allah, or if he should raise Muhammad to a status higher than prophethood, he ceases to be a Muslim. The only exception to this claim would be Louis Farrakhan and his group who have preserved the beliefs of Elijah Muhammad to the effect that Allah appeared in the person of Farrad Muhammad in Chicago in the beginning of this century. Whoever holds such a belief is in manifest *shirk* and is not a Muslim. But Farrakhan and his group claim to be Muslims. And, amazingly, this claim is recognized by ignorant Muslims, and by equally ignorant Muslim leaders!

The Jews raised Ezra to be the son-of-God. The Christians went further. They raised Jesus not only to son-of-God, but

made him part of what they called the 'God head.' The Buddhists also made a God of Buddha. It is only the Muslims who have remained faithful to the teachings of the founder in refusing to exalt Muhammad (s) to the status of Divinity.

At the time of the death of the Muhammad (s), the people gathered in the mosque were hesitant in believing the news. Omar, in fact, threatened to kill anyone who said that Muhammad (s) was dead. Abu Bakr, the sage, went into the Prophet's home, kissed the dead body on the forehead, and then went out to make the historic statement to the crowds outside: *Oh people, if you worshipped Muhammad, then know that Muhammad is dead. But if you worship Allah, then know that Allah is alive and will never die.*¹²⁷

Finally, to bring this archetypal comparison to a close, let us examine the moral personalities of Buddha and Muhammad (s).

Our studies in Buddhism and the life of Buddha have created in us deep respect and great love for the man himself, and a sympathetic appreciation for the conditions under which he was brought up, and which left a deep impression on his life. We firmly believe that he had a highly-developed moral personality and that he led a good life. But as much as he inspires awe and devotion, the critical student cannot escape the responsibility of examining Buddha's moral personality in particular and his over-all personality in general *in so far as it forms an archetype for human life and conduct.*

Again we shall restrict ourselves to a discussion of just one point, for it is quite sufficient to prove our case.

It is one of the axioms of moral philosophy that the 'means'

¹²⁷ Cf. Dinet and Ibrahim: The life of Muhammad, the Prophet of Allah, p. 210

should always conform to the 'end'. Gautama Buddha, by his own testimony, did achieve his end, namely, '*enlightenment*' and '*nirvana*', but the '*means*' he adopted did not conform to the 'end'.

At the age of 29 he is reported to have abandoned his young beautiful wife and his infant son. And for the rest of his life, even after he had attained the goal for which he left his home, he never resumed his duties as a husband and a father. He never returned to his life at home despite the fact that he revisited his native city and his home. By no stretch of imagination can this act be conceived of as pardonable, far less exemplary and archetypal. If all husbands and fathers were to desert their wives and children and spend the rest of their lives seeking enlightenment and ministering to the moral needs of mankind, the greater part of mankind will be reduced to unimaginable sufferings. As an archetype, therefore, Gautama Buddha suffers from a very serious defect.

The archetype of Islam, the holy Prophet Muhammad (*s*), also possessed a highly developed moral personality. But far from deserting his wife and children, he performed his duties as a husband and a father until his death, with the greatest love, the greatest compassion and extreme devotion. Muhammad married, when he was 25, a *twice-married widow*, 15 years older than himself, who had three children. For the next 25 years, the most sexually active for male, Muhammad (*s*), and sexually subdued for the female, Khadija (*ra*), the Prophet of Islam remained loyal, faithful, loving, kind, dutiful and compassionate to his ageing wife who, when she died, was 65 years old. He then married Sauda, an elderly widow. And for the next five years she remained his only wife. After this the Prophet married a number of times and history records that, with the exception of Aisha, all of these wives were widows with children or divorced women. His entire married life thus sets a precedent¹²⁸, which effectively counteracts the

¹²⁸ My own mother was a widow with a child when my father married her. He explained his choice as follows: If Muhammad, the Prophet of Allah, can marry a widow with children, so can I.

stigma, and even prohibition attached to the remarriage of widows and divorcees. Not only this, but by virtue of Muhammad (s) being the archetype of Islam, Islam has ensured that all those who emulate its archetype will be kind and loving, faithful and compassionate to their wives and children. If all men should follow the example of Muhammad (s) many tears of this earth will change to smiles.

We do not propose to go into a detailed description of the overall personality of the archetype of Islam. Suffice it to bring to the notice of the reader that one of the greatest minds of the modern age considered the archetype of Islam to be eminently acceptable. George Bernard Shaw says:

The mediaeval ecclesiastics, either through ignorance or bigotry, painted Muhammedanism in the darkest colours. They were, in fact, trained to hate both the man Muhammad and his religion. To them Muhammad was the anti-Christ. I have studied him, the wonderful man, and in my opinion, far from being an anti-Christ, he must be called the savior of Humanity. I believe that if a man like him were to assume the dictatorship of the modern world he would succeed in solving its problems in a way that would bring it the much-needed peace and happiness."¹²⁹

Annie Besant writes:

It is impossible for anyone who studies the life and character of the great Prophet of Arabia, who knows how he taught and how he lived, to feel anything but reverence for that mighty Prophet, one of the greatest messengers of the Supreme. And although in what I put to you I shall say many things which may be familiar to many, yet I myself

¹²⁹ Quoted in Charms of Islam, Aisha Bawany Wakf, p. 40

feel, whenever I reread them, a new wave of admiration, a new sense of reverence for that mighty Arabian teacher.¹³⁰

The conclusion is, and must be, that the archetype of Islam is superior to that of Buddhism. The archetype of Islam found perfection in every aspect of his personality, every dimension of his life, to the extent that Allah himself declares of him:

وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ.

Verily thou possesseth greatness (in excellence with regard to) every dimension of thine personality.

(Qur'an: 68:4)

It is the personality of the man Muhammad (s), as much as the religion which he taught, which even today, 1400 years after his death, can capture the hearts of men and women of all races, of all classes, of all colours, - men and women of the highest intellect and greatest learning, - to rekindle and redynamise, again and again, the revolution which he initiated, - to reawaken, even in the darkest of hours, all that is great and divine, noble and good, in the human personality, - to change the course of human history and to strive, till death overtakes them, for establishing here on earth the 'heavenly abode of peace' (*dar al-salaam*).

No religion can survive without an archetype. No religion can build a human personality except on the pattern of its archetype. A single defect in the archetype leads to ten-fold defects in the personalities of all those who faithfully imitate it. Hence nothing less than perfection is acceptable. The archetype of Islam alone is perfect. It is certainly superior to the Buddhist archetype.

¹³⁰ Besant, Annie: The Life and Teaching of Muhammad, p. 4

Comparison of the Philosophies of Life of Buddhism and Islam

A religious philosophy of life centres around three main concepts, - Man, the World and God. We shall attempt, in this section, to compare the Buddhist and Islamic philosophies of life within the framework of these three basic concepts.

A. The Buddhist Philosophy of Life

Man

Here we are confronted with such questions as: What is life? What is the origin of life? What is the purpose of life? What is the goal or destiny of life? What is the place of man in the scheme of things, etc.?

Buddhism, as we saw in our discussion on the theory of dependent origination, places the origin of life in 'the craving for life', conceives of the purpose of life as being a struggle to escape the sufferings of the world, and holds out *Nirvana* or non-existence as the end of life. The question 'beyond *Nirvana*, what?' is considered to be inadmissible.

As regards the place of man in the scheme of things, we have to look to the theory of *Karma* and the transmigration of souls for the position of Buddhism. Life is a cycle of rebirth, which continues till one has attained salvation. Man is a cog in the wheel. He might just as well have been an animal, but was born as a man by virtue of his good deeds in a previous life. Buddhism, fortunately, did away with the Hindu caste system and so escapes the further criticism of dividing humanity itself. In Hinduism, one may be born as a Brahman of high caste and so be closest to salvation, or one may be born as an untouchable to live as a veritable outcaste from society, scorned and abused.

There are certain disconcerting corollaries to this philosophy of man as found in Buddhism. Since the purpose of

life is to escape from the universal fact of suffering, Buddhism is led on to a philosophy of the world that is negative and escapist. Let us discuss this.

World

Buddha never discussed such all-important questions as the origin of the world or the destiny of the world. But in so far as the constitution of the world is concerned, it appears as though he conceived of the world as being an 'immoral order', if we may be permitted to coin the phrase. The world is not so constituted as to be compatible with success in the moral struggle (*i.e.*, it is not a moral order). Nor is the world indifferent to man's moral life (materialism). Rather the world, and all it relates to, constitute the greatest obstacle to man's pursuit of salvation. This being so, Buddhism adopts a negative attitude towards the world and encourages what in religious terminology is called, 'the other worldly life'. When this philosophy was applied to Buddhist personality culture, it gave rise to the ideal of detachment. This philosophy of 'other worldliness' with its practical form of '*detachment*' gave rise to important consequences in the domain of morality. *The goal of the Buddhist philosophy of life, in so far as it pertains to moral philosophy, is not a collective effort for victory in the moral struggle, but, rather, individual effort for escape from the world.*

God

Despite the fact that Buddha remained perfectly silent on the question of god, Buddhism evolved for itself the concept of god. This it did in an extremely shabby way to incorporate within itself the very evils against which it rose as a revolt. Idol-worship is now common all through the Buddhist world. And the Hindu incarnate gods have found expression in Buddhism with Buddha as god, who incarnates from time to time to render assistance to the forlorn multitudes struggling for salvation.

This concept of god falls far short of the requirements of the authentic religious consciousness which conceives of God as the *embodiment of all perfection* - infinite in respect of His being as well as His attributes. A god who can be born as a man, live as a man, and die as a man, be subjected to all the human privations and frailties, etc., cannot be conceived of as the embodiment of perfection, whether he be Gautama or Jesus. It does sound queer to say that god died at the age of eighty, or that god, before he was crucified, complained of having been forsaken!

The philosophy of life in Buddhism as revealed in its concepts of man, the world and god, gave rise to certain consequences which mar the serene face of Buddhism. The anti-worldly-life stand of Buddhism led, within the life-time of its founder, to the establishment of the institutions of monasticism and celibacy.

Monasticism

Of all religions in the world, Buddhism lays the greatest emphasis on monasticism. *It is impossible for the layman to work out his own salvation while in the world, fettered by its ordinances and under the spell of its attractions. He must renounce the world and become a monk so that, undistracted and at leisure, he might pursue the highest ends and win for himself final deliverance.*¹³¹

The criticism of the institution of monasticism is that it tends to weaken or even distort the perspective of the monk with respect to the richness of human life as it reveals itself in the theoretical - the multifarious branches and dimensions of thought and feeling, and in the practical - the numberless forms of activities which find expression in man's social life. Monasticism, as an ideal, finds it indispensable to cultivate in the mind of the monk a certain contempt for the non-monastic life. This results in his being cut away and deprived of the springs of inspiration which ever flow

¹³¹ Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, art: 'Monasticism' (Buddhist) vol. 8, p. 796.

through and through organized society beckoning the perceptive consciousness to newer, fresher, more creative worlds of thought and action. The monastic life, as an ideal or an institution, robs life of the opportunity to be lived, as it ought to be lived, - as a many splendoured thing.

But the monastic life as a form of *temporary withdrawal from the world open to all men* is, on the other hand, an absolute necessity if man is to have self-realization. The Qur'an recommends this form of withdrawal. In fact it establishes an institution of withdrawal. In Chapter 73, '*Surah al-Muzzammil*', of the Qur'an this subject is examined and treated thoroughly and a scientific and beneficial method of withdrawal is actually given. The following quotations are all from *Surah al-Muzzamil*:

يَا أَيُّهَا الْمُزَّمِّلُ. قُمْ اللَّيْلَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا. نِصْفَهُ أَوْ انْقُصْ مِنْهُ قَلِيلًا. أَوْ زِدْ عَلَيْهِ.

Oh thou, folded in garments (i.e. the garments of worldly life), stand (in prayer) by night, but not all night, - half of it or a little less or a little more.

Standing in prayer by night is a form of withdrawal from the worldly life. This is very clear from the use of the word *Muzzamil* (one folded in garments) in the previous verse. But the Qur'an immediately proceeds to forbid a permanent withdrawal (but not all night!). This withdrawal must be intelligent and temporary ('half of it or a little less or a little more').

وَرَتِّلِ الْقُرْآنَ تَرْتِيلًا. إِنَّا سَنُلْقِي عَلَيْكَ قَوْلًا ثَقِيلًا.

And recite the Qur'an in slow, measured rhythmic tones. Soon shall we send down to thee a weighty message.

The withdrawal, which is to be employed for the purpose of reciting and pondering over the revelation of Allah, prepares the soul to serve as an instrument of the Divine Will.

إِنَّ نَاشِئَةَ اللَّيْلِ هِيَ أَشَدُّ وَطْئًا وَأَقْوَمُ قِيلاً.

Truly the rising by night is most potent for governing (the soul) and most suitable for (framing) the Word of (prayer and praise).

Abdullah Yusuf Ali comments on the above verse as follows:¹³² . . . *for contemplation prayer and praise, what time can be so suitable as the night, when calm and silence prevail, and the silent stars pour forth their eloquence to the discerning soul.*

The *Surah* directs attention to the fact that the day keeps us preoccupied with multifarious activities:

إِنَّ لَكَ فِي النَّهَارِ سَبْحًا طَوِيلًا.

Truly, there is for thee by day prolonged occupation with ordinary duties.

There must, therefore, be a time for work, and a time for withdrawal. Neither should incorporate nor intrude upon the other so that one should devote one's time exclusively to affairs of the world, or on the other hand, that one should withdraw completely from the worldly life.

وَاذْكُرْ اسْمَ رَبِّكَ وَتَبَتَّلْ إِلَيْهِ تَبْتِيلاً.

¹³² Abdullah Yusuf Ali: Translation and Commentary of Qur'an, notes 5759, p. 1633

But keep in remembrance the name of the Lord and devote thyself (i.e. withdraw) to Him whole-heartedly.¹³³

The withdrawal to Allah, which must be complete while it lasts, is symbolized by the night, which follows the day.

This is the monasticism of Islam. In this sense every Muslim is supposed to be a monk for a part of every night of his (or her) life! But the monasticism arising from an anti-world philosophy, which establishes itself as a permanent full-time institution outside of society, is forbidden in Islam. Such is the monasticism of Christianity and Buddhism.

The real value of the idea of withdrawal is that *a man has to live with himself for a while in order to really discover himself* And it is only after he has discovered himself that his life will have real meaning and creativity - whatever be his area or sphere of activity.

Every man is a voice unto himself.

And he will never worship

The Great God

In the Great Temple

Till first he sits in silence

Before the Eternal Flame,

In the inmost shrine

Within his heart.¹³⁴

¹³³ Ibid., (73:1-8)

¹³⁴ The Flame of Life, one of my unpublished poems.

This is the ideal Islam, that a man should first realize himself in order that he may realize the divine truths.¹³⁵ When we examine the life of the Prophet of Islam we find him again and again withdrawing at night to the lonely, quiet spots, far from the madding crowd, in order that he might again and again rediscover himself and the truth he was to preach.

Thus Islam wants each one of us to be a mystic or monk for some time in his life. But it should be in the form of dispersed moments of withdrawal so planned as not to bring about a complete rupture with the worldly life.

Secondly, Islam insists that withdrawal is not an end in itself. Rather, it is a means to an end. *Withdrawal is meant for recharging the spiritual dynamo with a view of returning to life better equipped to fight the battle of life.*

Celibacy

In the same strain in which Buddha advocated the monastic life, he also advocated celibacy. He set the example by abstaining from sex from the day he parted from his wife to the day he died. The elite of Buddhists, in fact the only real Buddhists, are the monks, and the primary indispensable foundation of the monastic life is celibacy. Buddhist and Christian scriptures are very clear on this issue that abstinence from sex is of paramount importance for withdrawal from the world. Thus Christ said: *There be eunuchs which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake!*

In the Dhammapada we read:

*men who have not practiced celibacy . . . pine away like
old cranes in a lake without fish;*

¹³⁵ "He who realizes himself realizes his Lord", said Ali (ra).

*men who have not practiced celibacy . . . lie like worn-out bows, sighing after the past.*¹³⁶

Celibacy, according to Dr. Conze, was a cornerstone of the monastic life. The orthodox cultivated a certain contempt for women. This contempt is, of course, easily understood as a defense mechanism, since women must be a source of perpetual danger to all celibate ascetics - especially in a hot climate. The reasons for this rejection of the sex impulse are not far to seek. A philosophy that sees the source of all evil in craving for sensuous pleasure would not wish to multiply the occasions for indulgence in sensual pleasure. *As long as the slightest thought of lust of a man towards women remains undestroyed, so long is his mind tied, even as the sucking calf is bound to its mother.*¹³⁷

Islam alone, among the religions of the world, has come out with a stinging denunciation of celibacy. Prophet Muhammad (s) declared:

Marriage is of my ways; he who goes against my ways is not of me.

Marriage is a half of faith.

The wisdom of the Islamic denunciation of celibacy has been confirmed by modern psychology. Sigmund Freud gave it a scientific interpretation. He declared (in his book, *Sexual-Problems*, March 1908) *I have not obtained the impression that sexual abstinence is helpful to energetic and independent men of action or original thinkers, to courageous liberators and reformers. The sexual conduct of a man is often symbolic of his whole method of reaction in the world. The man who energetically grasps the objects of his sexual desire may be*

¹³⁶ Radhakrishnan and Moore: *Op. cit.* , p. 304

¹³⁷ Conze, *Op. cit.* p. 58

*trusted to show a similarly relentless energy in the pursuit of other aims.*¹³⁸

The suppression of the sex impulse leads to neuroses of a thousand and one kinds. On the other hand, normal healthy sex relations in marriage can solve a thousand and one kinds of neuroses and ailments.

*There are, says Hinton, innumerable ills terrible destructions, madness, even the ruin of lives - for which the embrace of man and woman would be a remedy. No one thinks of questioning it. Terrible evils, and a remedy in delight and joy! And man has chosen so to muddle his life that he must say: "There, that would be a remedy but I cannot use it, I must be virtuous."*¹³⁹

Dr. Abbasi¹⁴⁰, quoting extensively from authoritative sources, lists all the different neuroses, illnesses, etc., which can and have arisen from sexual abstinence and have been cured by resumption of sex life. He concludes his well-written article on the following note:

Now after knowing all these scientific facts and truths, who can deny the greatness of Muhammad (s) who vehemently discouraged celibacy, asceticism and monasticism. . . .He foresaw the dangers of celibacy as well as the advantages of the married life. Though an ummi (unlettered), he proclaimed that the conception of ascetic 'sexual abstinence' was an entirely false and artificial conception. It is not only ill-adjusted to the hygienic facts of the case but it fails even to invoke any genuine moral motive, for it is exclusively self-regarding and self-centered. It only becomes genuinely moral and truly inspiring when we transform it into the

¹³⁸ Quoted by Dr. Abbasi in his article 'Problems of Sex explained in the Light of Islam and Modern Science', published in the 'Voice of Islam', Karachi, Vol 1, No. 3.

¹³⁹ Abbasi, Op. cit. p. 96

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 96-7

altruistic virtue of self-sacrifice. When we have done so we see that the element of abstinence ceases to be essential. Self-sacrifice is acknowledged to be the basis of virtue; the noblest instances of self sacrifice are those dictated by sexual satisfaction. Sympathy is the secret of altruism; nowhere is sympathy more real and complete than in love. Courage, both moral and physical, the love of truth and honor, the spirit of enterprise, and the admiration of moral worth, are all inspired by love as by nothing else in human nature. Celibacy denies itself that inspiration or restricts its influence, according to the measure of its denial of sexual intimacy. Thus the deliberate adoption of a consistently celibate life implies the narrowing down of emotional and moral experience to a degree which is, from the broad scientific stand point, unjustified by any of the advantages piously supposed to accrue from it.¹⁴¹

The Islamic denunciation of the institution of celibacy as found in Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, etc., has its vitally important complement in the concept of sex and marriage in Islam. *Again Islam's viewpoint was unique and diametrically opposed to well-nigh universally accepted sexual philosophy of its contemporary faiths.* Islam denied that sex is the Satan in man. Rather sex, like food and water, is a natural biological need which has to be fulfilled for man to live a normal healthy life. Islam went further to make the sex act a sublime and holy act and to invest it with both psychological and spiritual purity. With this foundation established, Islam could and did wage a successful war against lust. The Qur'an makes lust absolutely forbidden:

فَخَلَفَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ خَلْفٌ أَضَاعُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَاتَّبَعُوا الشَّهَوَاتِ فَسُوفَ يَلْقَوْنَ غِيًّا .

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p. 102

But after them (the righteous posterity of the great prophets) there followed a posterity who missed prayers and followed after lusts: Soon, then, will they face destruction.

(Qur'an: 19:59)

In fact the command of Allah to Adam and Eve, when He placed them in the garden, was:

وَلَا تَقْرَبَا هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ.

Do not approach this tree (i.e., lust.).

(Qur'an: 2:35)

The Qur'an refers to the emergence of sex consciousness in Adam and Eve when it speaks of the sense of shame disclosed in their anxiety to cover the nakedness of their bodies after they had tasted the forbidden tree¹⁴²(20:121).

According to the Qur'an, the proper psychological frame of mind for the sex act can only arise when its legal requirements are fully met. For this reason Islam permits the satisfaction of the sexual desire through lawful means only.

But, as Dr. Ansari observes, the institution of marriage in Islam is not meant for the mere satisfaction of sexual desire:

Although the union of man and woman in marriage involves the satisfaction of sexual appetite, it is not, in the view of the Qur'an, the end of marriage, - the end being spiritual companionship and mutual love, to which the sexual union itself should contribute, but which is marked off distinctly from mere sexual pleasure. The Holy

¹⁴² Most commentaries of the Qur'an give a different interpretation of the verse relating to the act of disobedience committed by Adam and Eve.

Qur'an says: 'And among His Signs is this, that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that ye might obtain tranquility and solace in them, and He ordained between you love and mercy. Verily in that are signs for those who reflect' (30:21).¹⁴³

The conclusion is that it is Islam with its positive and healthy attitude towards social life, sex and marriage, and not Buddhism with its indispensable institutions of monasticism and celibacy, which can establish the conditions necessary for the establishment of a happy stable social order, and for the fulfillment of the human longing for a life of peace, happiness and satisfaction.

B. The Islamic Philosophy of Life

The Principle of Unity: Ontological Cosmological and Epistemological Applications.

The Islamic Philosophy of Life revolves around the principle of unity (*tawhid*). This principle of unity has manifold applications. In its ontological application it gives us the absolute monotheism of Islam, - *One God*. The cosmological application results in the concept of the *world or the universe as an organized whole*.¹⁴⁴ Even in epistemology we find the principle of unity at work. Islam's theory of knowledge is absolutely unique and revolutionary. *All knowledge forms one whole*. All the different branches of knowledge are inter-related and inter-dependent. The perfectly-educated scholar is he who is educated in as many

¹⁴³ Ansari, Dr. F.R.,: *The Qur'anic Foundations and Structure of Muslim Society*, Vol. 2. p. 36.

¹⁴⁴ The dislocation or imbalance of any of its parts will throw the entire machinery of the universe out of gear. The Americans and Russians would therefore be well advised to make a through investigation of the constitution of the moon before they start exploding their nuclear devices, etc, up there.

different branches of knowledge as possible, and who achieves a concordance of all this knowledge on the basis of the fundamental truths laid down in the Qur'an.

Psychological Application: In the psychological application, the principle of unity gives us the *unity of human nature*. *Man is a unitary being, - an integrated whole*. Both Christianity and Buddhism oppose this concept. Christianity conceives of man *as a dual being*. He is both a physical being and a spiritual being, and they are always at war because they are diametrically opposed to each other. The flesh is evil; it is the spirit which is good. Buddhism surpasses Christianity to give us the *multiple man*. Man is a conglomeration, an unholy alliance of many different *skandas*¹⁴⁵ which, for the sake of convenience, are conceived as a whole and given a name.

Application to mankind: Islam does not stop with man as a unitary being. It goes on to give the concept of mankind as unity. All human beings, irrespective of color, class, caste¹⁴⁶ or creed form one family, - the universal brotherhood of man. In the history of the world it is only Islam which has so far succeeded in establishing the real brotherhood of man. H.A.R. Gibb, the learned orientalist, makes a significant statement which should be brought to the attention of our readers (particularly in this age in which war is relentlessly being waged on Islam):

But Islam has yet a further service to render to humanity . . . No other society has such a record of success in uniting in an equality of status, of opportunity and endeavour, so many and so various races of mankind. The great Muslim communities of Africa, India and Indonesia, perhaps also the small Muslim community in Japan, show that Islam

¹⁴⁵ See p. 29.

¹⁴⁶ The reader should note that the caste system still exists in Indian Hindu Society.

*has still the power to reconcile apparently irreconcilable elements of race and tradition. If ever the opposition of the great societies of the East and the West is to be replaced by co-operation, the mediation of Islam is an indispensable condition.*¹⁴⁷

Biological Application: In its biological application the concept of unity gives us *life as a single unitary evolutionary principle*. In respect of life man is inseparably related and conjoined to other living organisms or beings. It is by virtue of possessing *personality* that man becomes distinct, different and absolutely unique! Bergson did not make this distinction between life (which belongs to the order of creation, i.e., the determined world - *alam al-khalq*) and personality (which belongs to the order of command, i.e., the world of freedom - *alam al-amr*).¹⁴⁸ He has mixed up both and presented personality as the flowering of the *elan vital*, i.e., the vital life impulse. But this is entirely arbitrary *for even the barest sparks of personality are not to be found in the non-human universe*.

Dr. Ansari has pointed out three further applications of the unitary principle. They are as follows:

Application to the Sexes: Islam gives, for the first time, the principle of the unity of sexes. Woman, according to Islam, is not to be conceived of as a chattel, an inferior being, or an evil being, or as a 'freak of nature' (Aristotle).¹⁴⁹ Rather woman and man are of the very same essence having both been created from the same single primeval self.¹⁵⁰ In this modern age in which a new philosophy of gender has created an insane and devastatingly

¹⁴⁷ Gibb, H.A.R.: *Whither Islam?*, p. 379.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Say, the essential human being is from the command of my Lord. (Qur'an: 17:85), and: Surely to Him belongs the worlds of Creation and of Command. (Qur'an: 7:54)

¹⁴⁹ According to Aristotle it is when nature fails to produce a man that a woman is born.

¹⁵⁰ Al-Qur'an, 4:1.

destructive feminist liberation movement, the philosophy of gender in Islam, based on the principle of the unity of the male and the female, is sorely needed.

Allah uses the analogy of the 'night' and 'day' to describe the basic male-female relationship and the dual, yet mutually compatible and inter-dependent roles which the male and the female must play in human society. (Qur'an: 92:1-4). The dire warning, implicit in every painted sunset, with its colorful display of the enthusiasm and joy with which 'day' approaches 'night' and plunges into her arms, is that when 'night' foolishly decides that she wants to become 'day' (modern women's liberation movement), it will only be a matter of time before 'day' begins to mate with 'day', and 'night' begins to mate with 'night'. The sons and daughters of today's feminists will tomorrow embrace the sexual perversity of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Application to Economics: In the field of economics, the principle of unity works for a non-exploitative union of labour and capital. The free and fair market offers equal opportunity to all. There are no privileged people in that market. All must assume risks. All must make effort. The free and fair market restores the essential unity of mankind. That free and fair market no longer exists in the world today, and has not existed since the market of the Ottoman Islamic Empire was destroyed.

Application to the problem of the conflict of faith and reason: Dr. Ansari also points to the principle of unity as solving the vexed problem of the conflict between faith and reason. Islam alone, among all the religions of the world, brings faith and reason into a harmonious relationship with its concept of Iman, i.e., 'rationally oriented faith'. Islam can afford this because it is built, not on dogmas, but on doctrines. It is Christianity, which is built on dogmas (trinity, incarnation, atonement, etc.), which seeks precarious refuge in a blind faith, flying in the face of the clear and elementary requirements of reason.

Goal in Life: The second basic principle in the Islamic philosophy of life is its goal in life. Once the goal of life is determined, everything else must be examined in the light of that goal.

In connection with the goal of '*Nirvana*' the Buddhist finds himself in a great muddle. In this life *Nirvana* may be salvation from suffering. But what of the life beyond death? Is the grave or pyre the end of life? Buddhism just does not answer! The Buddhist, faced with this problem, has two options. Either he interprets *Nirvana* to mean stark non-existence after death, or he frankly admits that he does not know what is *Nirvana*. But neither of these interpretations can make *Nirvana* acceptable as the ultimate goal in life.

If my destiny is to pass into non-existence, if my goal in life is to end life, I can hardly be expected to muster up the enthusiasm for participating competitively, originally, and creatively in the over-all struggle of life, moral or otherwise, whether it be in thought or in action. Great achievements come only through great sacrifices and men are prepared to make the sacrifice of life itself if they are given a sufficiently attractive goal in life. It would appear that Buddhism has failed to give this goal.

There is another peculiarity of the Buddhist goal of life. In Buddhism we come across the peculiar phenomenon of Buddhists working their way towards their goals, not on the positive psychology of the 'pull' of the goal, the 'force of attraction' of the goal, but rather on the negative psychology of the 'push' of the past and the rejection of the concrete objective reality in the here and now!

Islam gives two goals in life - one immediate and the other ultimate. The first being achieved, the second is sure to be achieved. The goal *in this life is*, according to the Qur'an, to so build the over-all human personality that it becomes godly, sublime and beatified.

The Qur'an commands:

كُونُوا رَبَّانِيِّينَ.

Be godly

(Qur'an: 3:79)

But the *ultimate* goal in life as given in Islam, and recognized today only by the Sufis, is that fulfillment of the ultimate longing of the lover for the beloved. It is the culmination of the struggle for achieving closeness to Allah (*qurbah*), it is the meeting with the Lord, - with Allah Himself:

فَمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُوا لِقَاءَ رَبِّهِ فَلْيَعْمَلْ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا.

Therefore he whose goal is the meeting with his Lord, let him be righteous in his conduct . . .

(Qur'an: 18:110)

These two goals in life are inter-related, for while achievement of the former leads naturally to the latter, by fastening the over-all gaze on the latter, a powerful psychological incentive is built or impetus given for the successful struggle to achieve the former.

Islam gives as attractive a goal in life as man can possibly want. Allah Himself is the goal of life in Islam. *To him do we belong*, says the Qur'an, and *to Him is our return* (2:156). He is the most potent factor in the life of a Muslim. In fact, all of life is to be saturated with God-consciousness the way love permeates the totality of the being of the true lover.¹⁵¹ And it is

¹⁵¹ It may be boldly asserted that no people in the world give the impression of being so religious-minded as do Muslims. All of life is saturated with the consciousness of God (C.R. Weston: *What is this Muslim World?*, pp. 38-9, London,

winning God's pleasure and meeting Him, which Islam holds out as the goal in life. The Muslim therefore, advances to his goal with the positive psychology of the 'pull' of the goal.

Secondly, the psychological value of this, the highest goal in life, is that it serves as the most powerful motivating force that can act on human behavior. The Muslim can be absolutely fearless of the terrors or tyrannies of this world, or of death, because for him, beyond death there is Allah. In the darkest hour Allah is with him. And there is a life in the hereafter which is better than this life¹⁵², - a life which Allah provides wherein His righteous servants shall not only enjoy the supreme bliss of the beatific vision, but shall also have all that their hearts desire, all that they have been asking for, as a gift from the Forgiving, the Merciful God.

Now the immediate goal being godliness, all human institutions, whether they serve biological, psychological, social, political, economic or academic ends, must be so constructed and maintained as to function as agencies for building and maintaining the godly personality. In fact, one's whole life must revolve around this pivotal ideal, - the goal in life of godliness. This is, perhaps, the most important application of the principle of unity.

But before the task of building the godly personality can be undertaken, certain vital philosophical questions must be answered, questions which pertain to Islam's philosophy of life and its concepts of man, the world and God.

Firstly, *what is human nature?* What is the origin of human life and the nature of human freedom? Is man so

1937). We well may ask: What do they know of this, who never have known the agony of love?

¹⁵² Qur'an: 87:16-17

constituted that he can become godly? Is the framework of godliness already present as a built-in nature in man? Or is man so constituted that his very nature is alien and hostile to godliness, or indifferent to godliness? To become godly, should man negate or affirm himself?

Secondly, what is the nature of the world? And what is the relationship which exists between man and the universe around him? Is the world so constituted as to be in harmony with, or is it an obstacle to the realization of, man's goal in life? To become godly, should man negate or affirm the world?

Finally, *what is the nature of God?* And what is the relationship which exists between man and God? Is the relationship between man and God such that man can know nothing about Him, - and that man has no affinity with Him? Or is it that God himself can incarnate as Jesus or Buddha or Ram and walk and talk among men, thereby establishing the closest affinity with man and providing him with the opportunity of a first-hand observation of God's personality and behavior? (The discerning reader, both male and female, would have noted the gender difficulty a writer faces when using the English language. In every use of the word 'man' in the above paragraphs, as well as here-under, our meaning includes both male and female! In the Qur'an Allah, using the Arabic language, employs the word *insaan*, which embraces both the male and the female in a non-discriminatory embrace)

All these questions must be answered before we can embark upon the task of making men godly. In fact the answers to these questions will determine whether or not it is possible or feasible to attempt to achieve the goal in life of godliness.

Man

The Origin of Life and Human Freedom:

As regards the origin of human life, Islam conceives of man as a created being - created *ab novo*, out of nothing, with a constitution which, far from being tainted with a heritage of sin (original sin - Christianity; *karma* - Buddhism and Hinduism), is rather described as being perfect:

لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ فِي أَحْسَنِ تَقْوِيمٍ.

We have indeed created man in the best of constitutions (or nature).

(Qur'an: 95:4)

Man therefore begins his sojourn in his earthly state with a clean slate, a clean bill of health.

In Buddhism, life has its cause in the 'craving for life'. In other words, man is responsible for his own existence. What follows is only logical. Since man is the agent of his own existence, by the same token he is the architect of his own destiny. He is what he makes himself - no more, no less. Here Buddhism seems to be in complete agreement with the modern atheistic existentialism of men like Jean Paul Sartre.

Such a philosophy cannot escape the problem of despair. Indeed it holds out to man stark terror and agony and makes man an infinitely lonely being in an alien, hostile world. This is so because it actually abandons man to all the terrors of the stormy, high seas without providing him with as much as a raft or even a log to which he can cling. And because no man in his right senses is prepared to accept such a state of affairs, atheistic existentialism must eventually modify its stand just as Buddhism modified hers.

In Islam it is Allah who created man, and Allah it is who further endowed him with personality and freedom.¹⁵³ And yet Allah is not prepared to abandon man to himself:

أَيَحْسَبُ الْإِنْسَانُ أَنْ يُتْرَكَ سُدًى.

Does man think that he will be left forsaken?

(Qur'an: 75:36)

Neither is man the complete architect and master of his destiny, nor is Allah the despot working out the destiny of man. Islam strikes the middle course. In so doing Islam escapes the stark terrors of the complete freedom of existentialism and Buddhism, on the one hand, and the stultifying, suffocating determinism of Spinoza or the *kismet* of the Persians, on the other. *Taqdir in Islam gives man the freedom to 'participate' in the making of his own destiny.* But the point to note is that his heart finds solace, his tremulous soul is comforted with the knowledge that *Allah Himself also participates with him in the making of his destiny.*

This thought is more than just comforting; it is revolutionary and dynamic, for it makes of such a Muslim, the most fearless human being there can ever be. In battle he is prepared to face an enemy ten times stronger and defeat him. This fearlessness has been amply demonstrated in Islamic civilization, time and again, not only on the battlefield but also in the battlefield of ideas. And there is a gloriously beautiful tomorrow, prophesied by Muhammad (s), which is coming, when authentic Islam will once again re-emerge triumphantly resplendent in history, and all its hostile rivals will be consigned to the garbage-bin of history!

¹⁵³Qur'an: 33:72.

On Human Suffering

For the Buddhist, the world is made up of suffering, - *sarvam dukkham*, 'all is suffering'. Since suffering is ingrained in the very nature of the world, it would hardly be worthwhile to try to confront the suffering of the world. The purpose of life in Buddhism is to escape from suffering, - to find salvation from suffering. The unfortunate reality is that this philosophy of life led many to leave the world to suffer and to seek shelter in an artificial mind which is so conditioned as to be unaffected by suffering.

For the Muslim there is suffering in the world. That suffering is not in the nature of the world. It can be removed. It is the duty of the Muslim, on the one hand, not to increase the misery and sufferings of the world, and on the other, to strive tirelessly to decrease them. The attitude here is not that of escape but of alleviation and amelioration. The fundamental attribute of Allah, the One God, is *compassion*¹⁵⁴; His compassion encompasseth all things.¹⁵⁵ The Prophet of Islam was sent by Allah as the 'source of compassion' for all the worlds.¹⁵⁶ And in the famous saying of the Prophet (s), mankind is urged to be compassionate:

Those who show compassion and mercy will have the same bestowed to them by the Compassionate One. Oh you earthly beings, be ye compassionate to one another! (If ye should do so) He who is in the heavens will show compassion to you.

This constitutes a positive Islamic attitude and response to suffering in the world.

¹⁵⁴ In the name of Allah, Most Compassionate, Most Merciful. (Qur'an: 1:1)

¹⁵⁵ Oh Our Lord, Your Mercy encompasseth all things. (Qur'an: 40:7)

¹⁵⁶ And We have not sent thee (Oh Muhammad) but as a mercy unto all the worlds. (Qur'an: 21:107)

The Rationale of Suffering: The Muslim further distinguishes between the sufferings of which man himself is the architect, and the sufferings which come from Allah. No motor-car can be displayed in the salesroom for public sale until it has been thoroughly tested. No aircraft is delivered to the purchaser until it has been tested again and again. It is through these testing in trying situations that defects are discovered and removed to make the aircraft safer and more reliable.

On the same analogy the human being has to go through tests so that he may be built into something durable, reliable and faultless. Allah uses suffering to try man, to test him, to build him:

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَنْفُسِ
وَالشَّمَرَاتِ، وَبَشِّرِ الصَّابِرِينَ.

Be sure We shall test you with something of fear and hunger, some loss in goods, or lives, or the fruits (of your toil), but give glad tidings to those who patiently persevere.

(Qur'an: 2:155)

By running from suffering man becomes a coward. By striving for personal immunity from suffering man becomes callous. By standing up and facing suffering squarely, bearing it with patience, and working for its alleviation, man becomes a hero. It is through Islam *par excellence* that man becomes a hero. This is so because it is the Qur'an which builds its philosophy of life on the concept of *sabr*. *Sabr* means patience, forbearance, composure, equanimity, steadfastness, firmness, self-control, self-command, self-possession, perseverance, endurance and hardiness. And the Qur'an has over a hundred references to *sabr*

The second point to note is that it is the Muslim who is best equipped to exercise *sabr*. This again is so because it is

the Qur'an which states that *Allah never places on any soul a burden greater than it can bear.*¹⁵⁷

On human nature and man's relation with God

In connection with human nature, Islam affirms the aboriginal godliness of the human transcendental self. At the dawn of creation, according to the Qur'an, Allah addressed a spiritual gathering of all of mankind, and took from them a covenant of godliness, - which covenant signifies the natural godly disposition of the spiritual being of man.

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِنْ بَنِي آدَمَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ وَأَشْهَدَهُمْ عَلَى
أَنْفُسِهِمْ أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ، قَالُوا بَلَى.

When thy Lord drew forth from the children of Adam, from their loins, their descendents, and made them testify concerning themselves (i.e. their transcendental selves) (saying:) Am I not your Lord? (i.e., is not the relationship which exists between your ownselves and Me such that I am the Creator, Evolver, Cherisher and Sustainer of your spiritual beings)? They said: Yea we do testify?

(Qur'an: 7:172)

Man has another dimension of his being besides the transcendental in as much as he is also a spatio-temporal being. In respect of this dimension also Islam affirms, *as no other religion affirms*, that human nature is so constituted as to be in harmony with the struggle for godliness. Man, we noted earlier, has been created in the best of constitutions or nature.¹⁵⁸ But what is more significant is that the human constitution or nature has been modelled after the Divine Nature:

¹⁵⁷ Qur'an: 2:286.

¹⁵⁸ Qur'an: 95:4.

فَطَرَتَ اللَّهُ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا.

The constitution of Allah according to which He hath constituted man.

(Qur'an:30: 30).¹⁵⁹

Thus is order to practise the religious way of life, according to the Qur'an, man does not have to negate himself. Rather, he has to affirm himself. *True religion means living a life in conformity with one's over-all nature¹⁶⁰*. In fact the measure of growth of the individual human personality corresponds exactly to its measure of affinity with Reality, for man is the microcosm of which *Reality* is the macrocosm;

فَأَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا. فِطْرَتَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا.
لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِخَلْقِ اللَّهِ. ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ، وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ.

Wherefore set thou thy face toward the true religion (which is, to follow) the constitution of Allah according to which He hath constituted man. There is no alteration in Allah's creation (i.e., human nature does not change!) That is the right religion (living a life in conformity with human nature) but most men know not.

(Qur'an: 30:30)

Thus according to the Qur'an, man, in his very nature, possesses a built-in framework of godliness. This is affirmed even more emphatically in the *hadith* literature where it is stated that *Allah created Adam (i.e., man,) in His own surah (likeness).*¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ Rendering by Maulana Abdul Majid Daryabadi (Holy Qur'an with English Translation).

¹⁶⁰ This is an absolutely unique and creative definition of religion given by the Qur'an.

¹⁶¹ And He created Adam in His own *surat* (image). *Hadith* .

Thus, as we pointed out earlier, the Islamic conception of human nature makes it possible for Islam to say that in order to attain godliness, *man must affirm himself*, - man must foster the growth of very dimension of his being.¹⁶² This is in contradistinction to other religious viewpoints where we find, as in Christianity, that in order to be godly man must negate himself, - i.e, his physical being, and in Buddhism where man has to negate not only his physical being and self, but also his very existence as an individual, his very 'I'.

World

In connection with the relationship which exists between man and the universe around him, Islam gives the unique answer that *the universe has been subjugated to man*. So that, far from being an obstacle, the universe becomes a tool which man can use for his own ends:

أَلَمْ تَرَوْا أَنَّ اللَّهَ سَخَّرَ لَكُم مَّا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ.

Do you not see that Allah has subjugated to you (use) all things in the heavens and on earth. . . .

(Qur'an: 31: 20)

To become godly man must build a relationship with nature. He must be a keen observer of the external phenomena, and he should reflect over his observations and ponder over his reflections. In so doing he not only discovers the reality of the world, but he also establishes for himself a pattern of life which leads naturally to godliness:

¹⁶² Truly he succeeds who promotes the growth of (all the dimensions of) his being. And he fails who stultifies that growth (either wholly or partly). (Qur'an: (!: 9-10)

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ لَآيَاتٍ لِأُولِي
الْأَلْبَابِ. الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قِيَامًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَى جُنُوبِهِمْ وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ
فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هَذَا بَاطِلًا، سُبْحَانَكَ فَقِنَا
عَذَابَ النَّارِ.

Behold! In the creation of the heavens and earth, and the alternation of the Night and the Day there are indeed Signs for men of understanding: those who remember Allah standing and sitting and lying on their sides, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth (until the realization of Allah's greatness as reflected in creation stuns them to the exclamation): 'Our Lord! Not for nought hast thou created (all) this. Hallowed be Thou! Give us salvation from the Fire'.

(Qur'an: 3:190-1)

The world is *real*. It is not, as in Hinduism, *maya*, an illusion, a dream, - not a figment of my imagination. For Christianity, and even more so for Buddhism, the world is an obstacle in the way of man's achievement of moral perfection. Both of these religions, therefore, in their original orthodox form, deny this world, turn away from this world, and project, consequently, a complete other-worldly philosophy of life.

Islam says that the world is real. It says more than this. It says that the world is so constituted as to be in harmony with man's moral strivings. In other words, this world is a *moral order*. It is possible for Islam to make this statement because Islam (with Christianity and Judaism) holds that the world is a *creation of Allah out of nothing*. This means that the total nature of the world has been given by Allah. But here Islam parts company with the other revealed religions to assert that Allah: not only created an ordered¹⁶³ universe but also placed

¹⁶³Qur'an: 69:3

in it a serious purpose and end. That the creation of the world, of life and death, is for a moral end, and that the world is a moral order, is stated in the following verses:

وَخَلَقَ اللَّهُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ وَلِتُجْزَىٰ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ
وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ.

And Allah has created the heavens and the earth with purpose (and for just ends) and in order that every soul may find the recompense of what it has earned, and none of them be wronged.

(Qur'an: 45:22)

تَبَارَكَ الَّذِي بِيَدِهِ الْمُلْكُ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ. الَّذِي خَلَقَ
الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا. وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْغَفُورُ.

Blessed is He in Whose Hands (i.e., possession) is the Dominion: and He over all things has Power; He who created Death and Life, that He might try you (as to) which of you is best in conduct, and He is the Exalted in Might, Oft-Forgiving.

(Qur'an: 67:1-2)

The conclusion in this respect is that, in its quest for godliness, Islam affirms, rather than denies, the world.

The Buddhist philosophy of the world is negative, the Islamic is positive! As we explained in the discussion on the religious schools of Buddhism, Buddha locked the doors of this world and preached a philosophy of 'other-worldliness'. Since 'all is suffering' and the Buddhist seeks to escape from suffering, he can only do that by severing his relations with the world. Most Buddhists have watered this down to a 'spirit of detachment',

trying to imply that though the flesh may be weak, still the spirit, at least, can be Buddhist.

The Qur'an, as we have seen, teaches that this world is real, i.e., it is 'a reality to be reckoned with'. The world, and all it contains, have been subjugated to man. Far from escaping from the world, man finds himself, in Islam, as the virtual sovereign of the world, the vicegerent of Allah (*khalifatullah*) in the world.

This positive philosophy has some very important implications.

Buddhism with its negative philosophy of the world has, in more than two thousand years, contributed very little to the advance of knowledge in the different fields of investigation which pertain to this world and the life of this world, *e.g.*, the natural and social sciences. A contribution has been made in the field of psychology to some extent, but that only negatively and not positively - since it is not based on an objective approach.

Islam, on the other hand, with its positive attitude towards the world (including the empirical self of man) actually inaugurated the scientific era, developed the scientific method, and laid the foundations for the vast and stupendous advances in knowledge and discoveries in different branches of science which characterizes the modern age. *The Qur'an itself served as the fountain-head which guided the Muslims in their academic and scientific pursuits.*

Hartwig Hirschfield writes:

We must not be surprised to find in the Qur'an the fountain head of the sciences. Every subject connected with heaven or earth, human, life, commerce and various trades is

*occasionally touched upon, and this gave rise to the production of numerous monographs forming commentaries on parts of the Holy Book. In this way the Qur'an was responsible for great discussions, and to it was indirectly due the marvellous development of all branches science in the Muslim world . . .*¹⁶⁴

Iqbal makes the same point when he comments:

*But the point to note is the general empirical attitude of the Qur'an which engendered in its followers a feeling of reverence for the actual and ultimately made them the founders of modern science. It was a great point to awaken the empirical spirit in an age which renounced the visible as of no value in man's search for God.*¹⁶⁵

The positive philosophy of the world gave rise, in Islam, to something which is even more unique. Prophet Muhammad is the only world leader, and Islam the only religion, which has made the quest of all knowledge (including the physical sciences) *compulsory on all its followers, male as well as female*. The very first revelation which the Prophet received began with the word *iqra* - pursue knowledge! The revelation then went on to give the *psychology of the quest for knowledge*, namely that Allah must be the source of inspiration and guidance in the pursuit of knowledge¹⁶⁶. Secularization of education has today effectively destroyed the link between the Allah and the pursuit of knowledge. Secondly, it pointed to the fruits of the quest for knowledge. By acquiring knowledge man is raised stage by stage, in a world which recognizes values, to the exalted state of honor and glory¹⁶⁷. The

¹⁶⁴ Hirschfield, Hartwig: New Researches into the Composition and Exegesis of the Qur'an, p. 9.

¹⁶⁵ Iqbal, Op. cit. p.13.

¹⁶⁶ Pursue knowledge in the name of Allah. (Qur'an: 96:1)

¹⁶⁷ Pursue knowledge and thy Lord, Who is the Most Honored (will raise thee to a state of honor). (Qur'an: 96:3)

world today has witnessed such a collapse of values that knowledge is now pursued in order to make money, be rich, control others, and live comfortably. Finally the Qur'an gives the *method of the quest*, namely the knowledge must be pursued systematically and acquired in a scientific, organized manner, through the use of the 'pen' and all that it symbolizes¹⁶⁸. 'Pen' symbolizes the recording of facts, observations, findings, hypothesis, *etc.*; the scientific development of language to serve as a proper instrument for the pursuit and spread of knowledge. The words 'read'¹⁶⁹ 'teach'¹⁷⁰, and 'pen'¹⁷¹ imply reading, writing, books, study, and research. The world of knowledge has today lost sight of this and is producing more and more people who are technically efficient in a single branch of knowledge and are jackasses in respect of all the rest of the world of knowledge. The intellect is fed with Mc Donald's hamburgers and KFC, and if Michael Jackson were to start dancing on his head they would all seek to imitate him, and all their expensive education would dance with them!

The Muslim is duty-bound, therefore, to enter into different branches of knowledge with a view to accumulating understanding, assessing and assimilating, with a critical outlook, the contributions of different nations and different scholars, and thence to proceed to the creative, daring task of striving to extend the frontiers of knowledge in every single branch of knowledge. Muslims have now abandoned this quest. And the scholars of an essentially godless and decadent modern western civilization have put the scholars of the world of Islam to shame.

God

Without God, Buddhism failed to give satisfactory answers in connection with the origin of life, the purpose of life, the goal

¹⁶⁸ Who taught with the pen. (Qur'an: 96:4)

¹⁶⁹ اِقْرَأْ *iqra*

¹⁷⁰ عَلَّمَ *'allama*

¹⁷¹ بِالْقَلَمِ *bil qalam*

or destiny of life, and the place of man in the scheme of things. Neither could Buddhism give a satisfactory philosophy of the world. In fact, without God Buddhism could not but give a philosophy of life totally inadequate, unsuited and unacceptable to basic human nature. Because of this mistake Buddhism has suffered the humiliation of being 'turned upside down' to the extent that it is today difficult to find the original gospel of Buddha in popular Buddhism.

Islam, with God, gave eminently satisfactory answers where Buddhism could not. Because of God man is a created being with an aboriginally pure moral constitution, a spiritual being who will survive death, a fully personal being endowed (as nothing else in the universe has been endowed) with a creative intellect, self-consciousness and a 'self-directed will' (*i.e.*, free-will). Because of God the purpose and end of life, as well as the goal of life, become positive, dynamic and sublime. Because of God man occupies the highest place in the scheme of things. Again because of God this world is real and is a moral order, that is, it is so constituted as to be compatible with success in the moral struggle.

Let us examine the relationship which exists between God and man. For philosophic Hinduism, God or the absolute, is the great unknown (*OM*). For *Mahayana* Buddhism the transcendental reality, which has been identified with *nirvana*, is unknowable. It is void (*sunya*). Even ancient Greek thought which, in its last upsurge took a religious turn in Plotinus, conceived of God, or, as he called it, 'the One', as *unknowable*. On this principle it becomes impossible to determine the relationship which exists between man and an eternally unknowable God.

Christianity, later Buddhism, popular Hinduism, and even Judaism have gone to the other extreme. According to Christianity and later Buddhism, God Himself is a *Man*. (Christianity: Jesus; Buddhism: Buddha). He incarnates as a man, comes down to earth

to live as a man, to suffer all the human frailties, privations and limitations, and finally to die as a man. In Hinduism the Gods are all men (Hinduism also admits of goddesses) who came down to earth and lived like human beings. *The relationship here is not the promotion of man to divinity but the demotion of God to humanity.* Even the God of Judaism does not escape this defect. He may not be a man, but He certainly behaves like one. For example, there were Jews who believed that God had a son called Ezra. Then again, he created the world in six days and became so tired that He had to rest on the seventh day, *etc. etc.!*

It is Islam, which, instead of degrading God, recognizes man as the vicegerent of Allah. Nay, Islam proclaims that Man has been constituted in such likeness, or on the same pattern as the Divine Constitution and Nature, that Islam can give to humanity the ideal seeking to imbue the Divine Attributes.¹⁷²

The relationship, therefore, which exists between man and God, is one of affinity. It is therefore possible for man to become godly, - to imitate the Divine Personality. In fact Islam has made this imitation of the Divine Personality compulsory, as we have just noted.

The second aspect of this relationship is that, as observed earlier, Allah Himself has appointed man as His Vicegerent (*khalifah*) on earth:

إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً.

Surely I am going to place on earth one who shall be My vicegerent.

(*Qur'an: 2:30*)

¹⁷² Cf. The hadith: Imbue yourselves with the divine attributes.

This establishes an official close relationship between God and man.

But, to become godly man must know something of the divine personality.

Islam says it is possible to know God. The knowledge of God is to be arrived at through different stages. The first stage is through revelation. The second stage is through observation, reason and experience (moral and mystic)¹⁷³. Both these stages, however, will give us knowledge of God only in so far as He is related to us - to His creation. In fact the Qur'an enshrines this relationship in the famous ninety-nine beautiful names of Allah. But of God, in himself, - in His essential being and essence, we do not have any knowledge.

وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِهِ عِلْمًا.

. . . by cognition they cannot comprehend Him.

(Qur'an: 20:110)

Even by analogy he cannot be comprehended; because, in his essence, nothing is like unto him.¹⁷⁴ لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ

Thus, the God of Islam is both unknowable and knowable. *Islam admits knowledge of God adequate to human requirements.* What more can man want? There are many reasons why man cannot, and should not have more. To begin with, God is an infinite being. Man is a finite being. The finite cannot

¹⁷³ In respect of the problem of proving the existence of God, Islam holds the position that God is not to be proved (proofs being rational and God being supra-rational). Rather God is to be achieved. God is to be experienced. But rational arguments can be used, and in fact must be used, to suggest very strongly the existence of God.

¹⁷⁴ Qur'an: 42:11

comprehend the infinite. *It is for the infinite to embrace the finite and to bestow on it such knowledge as its finitude admits.*

Secondly, it is a psychological characteristic of man's rational consciousness that to grasp, comprehend and know a thing is, in a very real sense, to make it subservient. In the very act of knowing God's total nature the rational consciousness will be undermining and eroding the basic utility of the belief in God.

The Concept of God

What is the nature of the God of Islam and how does He compare with His Buddhist counterpart? Buddhism actually has no God to offer for comparison. What the Buddhists now worship as God, - *i.e.*, the idols, even Buddha himself who reincarnates, - is not to be found in original Buddhism. And so it is not really fair to make these innovations representative of original Buddhism.

In so far as the general concept of God is concerned there are two fundamental questions we can raise. Firstly, ought there to be a God? And secondly, if there is a God, what should be His qualities?

In respect of the first question, we shall be content with drawing the attention of the reader to this monograph as a whole, - Buddhism experimenting without God, and Islam insisting on God, and leave the reader to draw his own conclusion.

Now with regards to the second question it must be admitted that God, in order to be God, ought to be the *embodiment of holiness and perfection*. If He falls short of holiness and perfection, He can never function as the highest goal in life or the explanation of all things for man. This is clearly in consequence of the fact that man possesses aesthetic, rational, moral and

spiritual or religious consciousness. But God, the perfect being, cannot be a finite being, for, as Dr. Ansari points out, *finitude is limitation, limitation is shortcoming, shortcoming is defect, and defect is imperfection.*¹⁷⁵

Therefore God, in order to be perfect, must be infinite. Again God, the infinite being, must be One. There cannot be two infinite beings, for infinity, by definition, is that which is limitless.

Of all the religions of the world, it is Islam and Islam alone which gives the concept of God as perfect, infinite, and one.

The God of Christianity suffers from the imperfections and finitudes of man, to the extent that when he (Jesus) was nailed on the cross, he actually cried out in distress for help:

Eli Eli lema sabachthani

My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me.

(Matthew: 27:46)

Secondly, the Christian concept of God is not monotheistic. There is a world of difference between God as One, and God as 'one in three and three in one'. The Christian Godhead is really triune.

The God of today's Judaism, though One, is not perfect. He has a defective sense of justice since He shows open favouritism to one race of people (the Jews) and excludes the rest of mankind (the Gentiles) from the possibility of entering Paradise.

The Gods and goddesses of Hinduism, are so numerous that it takes an effort to remember even their names.

¹⁷⁵ Ansari, Dr. F.R.: Foundations of Faith, p. 36

In Islam, God is embodiment of all perfection. He is the self-existent, self-subsistent, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient God, besides whom there is no other. He is the compassionate, the merciful, the loving, the kind, the generous, the forgiving, the just. He is fully personal being with whom man can consequently communicate.

The foregoing discussion has demonstrated that the concept of God in Islam is not only rationally acceptable and sublime, but also absolutely unique and without parallel.

Summary

The Islamic philosophy of life revolves around the principle of unity (*tawhid*) which finds expression in the unity of man, the world and God, and the concept of rationally-oriented faith. In respect of the goal of life, Islam gives the ideal of godliness. Unlike the Buddhist goal of life, the Islamic goal of life is definite, positive, and eminently acceptable. Furthermore, all the prerequisites necessary for the successful struggle to achieve the goal are met in the Islamic concepts of man, world, and God.

Conclusion

The conclusion is that it is Islam and not Buddhism which meets the requirements of man's religious consciousness and, thus, possesses the capacity to survive the modern age, - an age which is witnessing the most powerful challenge to the religious way of life ever witnessed in history.

Our scriptural, dimensional and archetypal comparison of Buddhism and Islam as well as the comparison of their respective philosophies of life have demonstrated the very clear superiority of Islam.

This confirms the truth of the thrice-repeated Qur'anic verse which states:

هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهُ عَلَى الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ وَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ شَهِيدًا.

He it is Who has sent His Messenger (Muhammad) with the guidance and the true religion (i.e., Islam) that it may prevail (time and again) over all other religions (or ideologies), and Allah suffices as a witness (that such will be).

(Qur'an: 9:33; 48:28; 61:9)

End

Glossary

Abhidhamma: one of the three books which comprise the Tripitaka. It deals mainly with Buddhist metaphysics.

Adi-Buddha: the great Buddha or the primeval Buddha.

Ahimsa: non-violence.

Alam al-Amr: the world of freedom.

Alam al-Khalq: the determined world.

Anatta: the not-self.

Anicca: the universal flux.

Arhat: the saint of the Hinayana sect.

Awa gawan: transmigration of souls.

Bhikshu: the Buddhist monk who lives the monastic celibate life and who trains himself for preaching the religious doctrines of Gautama Buddha.

Bodhisattva: the saint of the Mahayana sect.

Bodhi tree: the famous tree under which Buddha attained enlightenment.

Dhamma: law (impersonal law).

Dhammapada: a Pali text dealing mainly with Buddhist ethics.

Dukh: suffering.

Fana: the psychological annihilation of the self as a prelude to its sublimation to the Divine Self.

Hinayana: one of the two famous sects of Buddhism. It is strongly orthodox.

Iblis: Satan.

Iman: (rationally-orientated) faith.

Jihad fi sabil Allah: struggle in the way of Allah, which inflicts a cycle of rebirth on anything falling short of moral perfection.

Khalifatullah: he who can become godly and then function as God's representative.

Lalitavistara: a Sanscrit text of the Buddhist scriptures. Replete with the miracles of Buddha.

Madhyamika: one of the philosophical schools of Buddhism which holds that there is no reality.

Mahamaya: Gautama's mother.

Mahatma: great self or great soul.

Mahayana: one of the two famous sects of Buddhism. It has departed to a considerable extent from the original teachings of Buddha.

Nafs al-ammarah: the self prone-to-evil.

Nafs al-lawwamah: the self, conscious of evil which it has committed, and regretful of having done so.

Nafs al-mutamainnah: the self free-from-evil and in a state of inner contentment and peace.

Nibbana: same of Nirvana.

Nirvana: salvation, enlightenment, the state of contemplative quietude.

Qur'an: the sole scripture of Islam.

Sabr: patience.

Sakyamuni: one of the names of Gautama. It literally means 'the sage of the tribe of Sakya'.

Sarvam dukham: all is suffering.

Sarvam kashnikam: all is fleeting.

Sautrantika: one of the philosophical schools of Buddhism. It corresponds to 'critical realism'.

Siddharta: the given name of Gautama.

Skanda: an incongruous transitory element.

Suddhodana: Gautama's father.

Sufis: the spiritual luminaries of Islam.

Sunya: void.

Sutta Pitaka: one of the three books which compose the Tri-Pikata. It is a collection of the sermons and discourses of Gautama Buddha and incidents in his life.

Tanha: desire, clinging to life.

Tathagata: the name by which Gautama called himself. It literally means 'he who has arrived at the truth'.

Tawhid: unity.

Tazkiyah: purification.

Tri-pitaka: a Pali text of the Buddhist scriptures.

Ummi: unlettered.

Vaibhashika: one of the philosophical schools of Buddhism. It corresponds to 'direct realism'.

Vinaya pataka: one of the three books which compose the Tri-pitaka. It is the book of discipline.

Yasoddhra: Gautama's young and beautiful wife.

Yogacara: one of the philosophical schools of Buddhism which holds that only the mental is real and that the material world is void of reality.

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